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**THE LIFE OF  
DAVID BELASCO**

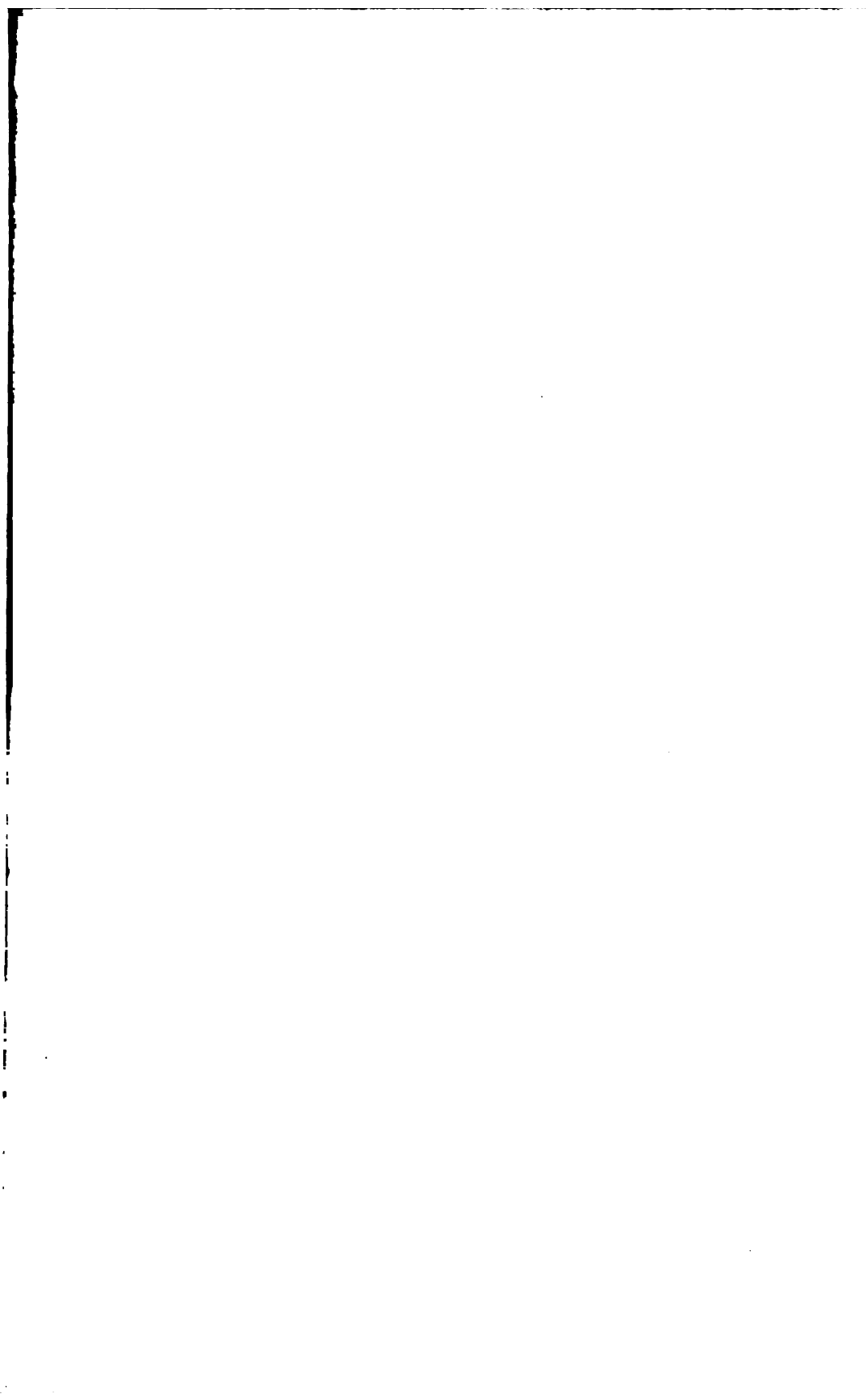
**VOLUME ONE**



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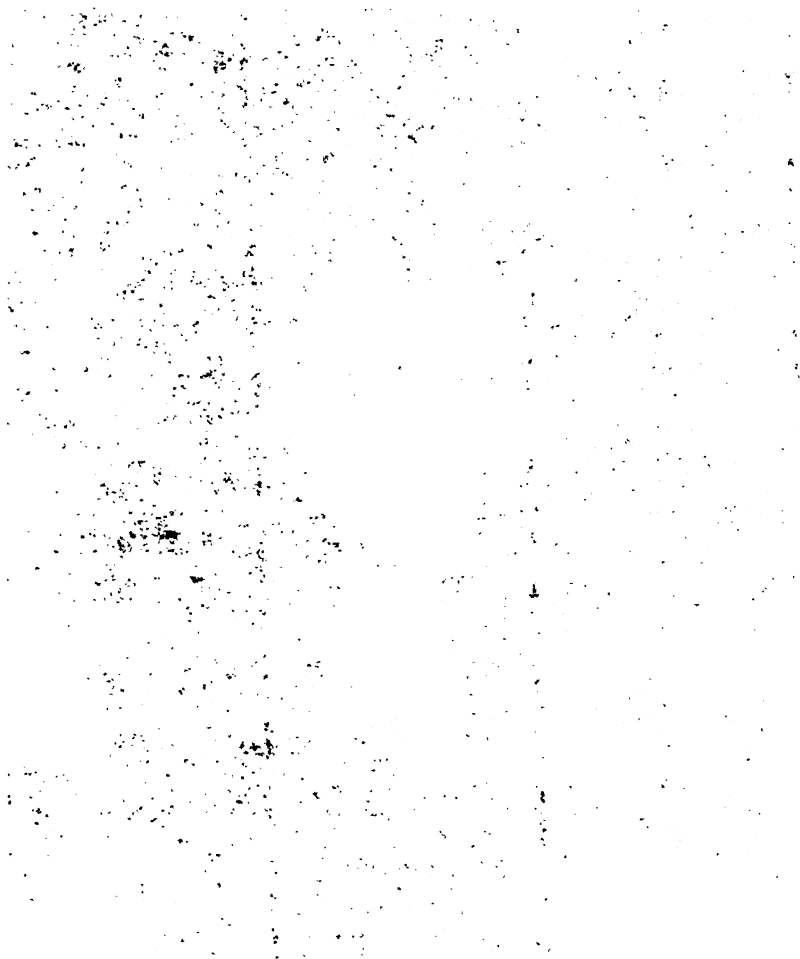
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DAVID BELASCO

Shakespeare  
- If it come not, then the play is marred.

Published by the  
New York





DAVID BELASCO

*"If he come not, then the play is marred!"*

—Shakespeare

From a portrait by the Misses Selby, New York.  
Author's Collection.



**THE LIFE  
OF  
DAVID BELASCO**

**BY  
WILLIAM WINTER  
(1836-1917)**

**"He, being dead, yet speaketh."**

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**VOLUME ONE**

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**NEW YORK  
MOFFAT, YARD AND COMPANY  
1918**



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Wendell Fund.  
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TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
REINA MARTIN BELASCO  
This Memoir of Her Son  
DAVID BELASCO  
Actor, Dramatist, and Manager,  
Whom She Dearly Loved  
And by Whom She Was Idolized,  
Is Reverently Dedicated  
By the Stranger Who Has Written It,  
Hoping Thereby to Honor and Commemorate  
Genius, Courage, Industry, Enterprise, and Energy,  
Exemplified in a Useful and Beneficent Life,  
In the Service of  
The Theatre

---

*If Heaven to souls that dwell in bliss can show  
The fate of those they love and leave behind,  
She, in that Heaven, may be glad to know  
Her son was honored with his human kind.*







*"Each petty hand  
Can steer a ship becalm'd, but he that will  
Govern and carry her to her ends must know  
His tides, his currents, how to shift his sails,  
What she will bear in foul, what in fair, weathers,  
What her springs are, her leaks and how to stop 'em,  
What strands, what shelves, what rocks, do threaten her,  
The forces and the nature of all winds,  
Gusts, storms, and tempests, when her keel ploughs hell  
And deck knocks heaven, THEN to manage her  
Becomes the name and office of a Pilot!"*

—BEN JONSON, IN "CATILINE."







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## PREFACE

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*My father's plan of THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO was communicated, in detail, by him to me. He realized that whenever he might die he was certain to leave much work undone. He hoped and expected, however, to live long enough to complete this book. It was in his mind to the very end. The last entry in his "Journal" refers to it: "June. Saturday, 2. Cloudy and gloomy. Worked all day on the Memoir." He spoke of it often during his agonized final illness. The last words he ever wrote are a part of it. I have, as well as I could, finished it for him, according to his plan, because I know that he wished me to do so.*

*This book was planned by Mr. Winter in 1913, as part of a comprehensive record of the American Stage which he purposed to write. Other kindred projects which he then had in view and on which he labored much include revised and augmented editions of his LIFE AND ART OF EDWIN BOOTH and LIFE AND ART OF JOSEPH JEFFERSON; joint biographies of HENRY IRVING and ELLEN TERRY, and an ency-*



*clopedical work to be called ALMS FOR OBLIVION, in which he intended to gather a vast mass of miscellaneous material relative to the Theatre. He also had in contemplation a LIFE OF AUGUSTIN DALY, but he abandoned it because his friend the late Joseph Francis Daly (Augustin's brother) had undertaken and in large part written a biography of that great theatrical manager and extraordinary man. All those projects languished because of lack of money: such books as those by William Winter issued since 1908 are, in every way, so costly to make that little commercial profit can be derived from them.*

*David Belasco, however, is the most conspicuous figure in the contemporary Theatre: his career has been long, picturesque, adventurous, and brilliant: "the present eye praises the present object," and it was deemed certain that an authentic LIFE of that singular, romantic person would prove remunerative as well as interesting, instructive, and valuable. In September, 1913, accordingly,—soon after Mr. Winter's THE WALLET OF TIME had been brought out,—I was, as his agent, easily able to make for him very advantageous arrangements for the publication of such a work,—first to be passed through a prominent magazine, as a serial, and then to be issued in book form. Mr. Winter was much pleased and encouraged by this arrangement, and he had begun to*



*gather and shape material for THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO when announcement was made that Mr. Belasco was writing and would presently publish, in HEARST'S MAGAZINE, an AUTOBIOGRAPHY. My father had met with a similar experience in 1893, when Jefferson's AUTOBIOGRAPHY, published as a serial in THE CENTURY, forestalled his authoritative LIFE of that great actor, rendering it, monetarily, almost profitless, and, therefore, he deemed it wise to lay aside this book.*

*Belasco's THE STORY OF MY LIFE was published in HEARST'S MAGAZINE, March, 1914, to December, 1915,—but, though it preëmpted the magazine field and made a work therein by my father impossible, it proved wholly inadequate and unreliable as a biography. In September, 1916, however,—soon after SHAKESPEARE ON THE STAGE—THIRD SERIES had been published,—Mr. Winter decided that the time was propitious for him to take up again the present Memoir, and, his publishers agreeing with him, he engaged to do so. He was then ill and weak; but he earnestly desired to work till the last, to be always doing, to overcome every obstacle by the force of his indomitable will, and, whatever he might suffer, never to yield or break under the pressure of adverse circumstance or the burden of age.*

*About the end of October, 1916, accordingly, he began the actual writing of this Memoir, and,*



*although repeatedly urged by me to desist, he continued in it almost to the last day of his life. "I might better be dead," he once exclaimed, "than to sit idle! I must go on: I must work at something: if it were not at this, it would be at something else. Moreover, I will not be beaten by anything: I will make this book the best thing of the kind I have ever yet done."*

*If he had lived he would have done so; but his spirit was greater than his strength. When death came to him unconnected sections of this book, amounting to about three-fifths of the matter contained in Volume One and about one-third of that contained in Volume Two, were in type, awaiting his revision. Much of the remainder was in manuscript—some parts of it practically completed, some of it more or less roughly drafted. My task has been, substantially, to supply some dates, to fill some blanks, and to edit, coördinate, and join the material left by my father. That task I have performed with reverence and care, and if the errors and defects in this work—which I hope are few—be recognized as mine, and the merits and beauties in it—which I know to be many—be recognized as his, then the responsibility of authorship will be rightly divided.*

*Mr. Winter was of many moods,—and, when possible, he wrought at his writing as he felt inclined. That is the reason why some passages in this book*



*which stand near to its close were finished and polished by him, while others, much earlier, were left incomplete or isolated. The subject of The Theatrical Syndicate, for example, was thoroughly familiar to him, and he wrote the section devoted to that subject in intervals of his restudy of "The Return of Peter Grimm," a play about which he had written, for this book, little but rough notes when the end came (I have, herein, reprinted his criticism of that play previously recorded in another place). The last passage in the text on which he worked is that treating of "The Girl I Left Behind Me." He brought the revised manuscript of that passage to me on the afternoon of June 2 and asked me to type it for him, saying: "I like the earnestness of it, and if you will make a fair copy for me I will go over it once more in the morning and dismiss it: I am too tired to go on to-day." On June 3, 4, and 5, although suffering acutely, he insisted on rising, each day, and attempted to work, but was unable to do so. On the morning of June 5 he was forced to take to his bed. That was the beginning of the end.*

*My father died on June 30, 1917. The direct cause of his death was uræmic poisoning, sequent on angina pectoris. His personal reticence was extreme; he disliked strangers about him and depended on me; it was, therefore, my very great privilege to wait on and nurse him in his final*



*sickness. His suffering was indescribable and was exceeded only by his invariable patience and gentleness. The last thing he ever wrote was the Dedication of this book. At about eleven o'clock on the night of June 9 he endeavored to compose himself to sleep. I sat at the door of his bedroom until about midnight, when, as it was obvious that he could not sleep and that he was in terrible distress, I went to him. The next two hours were specially hard: there is little that can be done in such circumstances but to hope for the release of death. Anybody who has seen and heard the piteous restlessness and the dreadful, strangulated breathing characteristic of such a condition as my father's then was is not likely to forget them. At about two o'clock in the morning, his breathing and his pulse both being so bad that I believed he was then to die, he asked to be helped out of bed into a chair. I lifted him into one, and, after a little while, he asked, with much difficulty, "Is there paper—pencil, here?" Supposing that he wished to write some request or message that he was not able to speak, I immediately gave him a pad of paper and a pencil. He sat for a few minutes with them in his lap, gathering his strength. Then he took them up and slowly, painfully, wrote the Dedication of this book, all except the four lines of verse with which it ends. He made a mark beneath the text and wrote there "Four lines of verse—not finished yet." A*



*while later he seemed to grow easier and presently asked to be got back to bed. The next day, June 10, in the forenoon, he asked me to help him to dress, which I did: it was the last time he ever had his clothes on. He read for a little while in one of his favorite books, Boswell's "Life of Johnson,"—the passage relative to the execution of Dr. Dodd. He presently spoke to me, in his old, gentle, whimsical way, of "the touching resignation shown in Johnson's letter to the fact that Dodd was going to be hanged." Then, after an interval of acute and dreadful distress, he spoke of his illness. He said: "It is my principle to go on. I felt that I was going to die last night,—that's why I wrote the Dedication to the 'Belasco.' I feared I should die before I could complete that work and the three other books I have undertaken. But my principle is to go on: to hold on, till the end—and then, still hold on! I do not mean to break. But I am very sick." Soon afterward he became so weak that it was necessary to get his clothes off and lift him back to bed. In the afternoon he roused himself again,—rising above the tide of poison which was slowly submerging him, as visibly as a drowning man rises in water,—and asked for the Dedication, which I had typewritten. He sat up in bed and revised it, as it now stands, and then added the four lines of verse. Although he had been suffering horribly for days he made but one mistake in writing the Dedi-*



*cation: he wrote "useless" instead of "useful"—and was much vexed with himself for doing so. In the last line of the verse he first wrote "boy"; in the evening he changed that word to "son."*

*Among the manuscript notes left by my father I have found the beginning of a PREFACE to this book, which I think it desirable to print here because it gives in his words some intimation of his purpose and feeling in undertaking the writing of it:*

---

David Belasco is the leading theatrical manager in the United States; the manager from whom it is reasonable to expect that the most of achievement can proceed that will be advantageous to the Stage, as an institution, and to the welfare of the Public to which that institution is essential and precious. I have long believed that a truthful, comprehensive, minute narrative of his career,—which has been one of much vicissitude and interest,—ought to be written now, while he is still living and working, when perhaps it may augment his prosperity, cheer his mind, and stimulate his ambition to undertake new tasks and gain new honors. In that belief I have written this book, not as a panegyric, but as a Memoir.

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## IN MEMORIAM

*"Earthly Fame  
Is fortune's frail dependent; yet there lives  
A Judge, who, as man claims by merit, gives:  
To whose all-pondering mind a noble aim,  
Faithfully kept, is as a noble deed;  
In whose pure sight all virtue doth succeed."*

—Wordsworth

Photograph by I. Almstaedt, Staten Island.  
Collection of Jefferson Winter.



# IN MEMORIAM

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been killed in the recent war, and the names of the persons who have been killed in the recent war, and the names of the persons who have been killed in the recent war.

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been killed in the recent war, and the names of the persons who have been killed in the recent war, and the names of the persons who have been killed in the recent war.

"Earthly Fame  
 is fortune's frail dependent; yet there lives  
 A Judge, who as man claims by merit gives.  
 To whose all-pondering mind a noble aim,  
 Faithfully kept, is as a noble death;  
 In whose pure sight all virtue hath succeeded."  
 - Wordsworth

Photographed by J. Almsworth, Nelson Island  
 Nelson Island, New Zealand





William Winter







*David Belasco and William Winter were friends for thirty-odd years. They did not always agree as to the course which should be followed in theatrical management; but their disagreements on that subject, such as they were, never estranged them nor lessened their mutual sympathetic understanding, respect, and regard. Belasco, undoubtedly, is what my father called him, "the last of the real managers," the heir of all the theatric ages in America that have been led by Dunlap, Caldwell, Gilfert, Wood, the Wallacks, Booth, McCullough, Ford, Palmer, and Daly, and it is fitting that his LIFE should have been written by the one man in all the world best qualified to perform the task. Belasco's feeling about the matter, at once modest and appreciative, is shown in a letter from which I quote the following:*

(David Belasco to William Winter.)

October 18, 1916.

MY DEAR WILLIAM WINTER:—

I am greatly honored to know that you are really going to write the history of my life! I will not say "It is an honor that I dreamed not of," because I *have* dreamed of it. But I never thought you would really undertake it. Of course I will, as you ask, very gladly do *anything* and *everything* I can to assist you.

But though my life has not been altogether an easy or uneventful one, in all sincerity I can hardly think of it as



worthy of your brilliant pen. Yet you know how I have always looked up to you, and so you will know how much this means to me and how much I appreciate it. And because "I hold every man a debtor to his profession" I am more than delighted that you think the public will be interested in the life of a theatrical manager,—and that manager me. If only I had been able to do all that I wanted to, then there would have been a career worthy even of your pen.

It pleases me so much whenever there comes a real, worthwhile tribute to the profession I adore—the Stage! It is great and wonderful to think that my name is to be written in the records of the American Theatre by you: that hereafter the name of Belasco (just a stroller from California in the dear old days of the pioneers) will be found written by you along with the names of those who made our Theatre *possible* as well as great. I mean the men and women who gave my profession of their best—long, arduous, weary years of hard, hard work, at the sacrifice of personal comfort; who studied and toiled and played their parts uncomplainingly night after night in the changing bills; the friends who were never too tired to learn something; who lived simply and poorly and yet had the courage to marry and bring up their children and give the Stage a new generation; the friends who found joy in the few hours they held sacred in the home—often a barren room or two. Beautiful! Those are the boys and girls I love—our pioneers. What pathetic figures—what noble examples many of them were! Such men and women I reverence—I salute them! And I thank you for the compliment you pay me, as a humble follower of the Theatre, when you write my name with theirs. . . . We must meet soon and have good, long talks about the golden days in California,—*my* California. *Facts* I can give you: exact *dates* I will not promise. I have never



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kept a "Diary." . . . As far as I possibly can I will make my convenience to suit yours. . . .

Faithfully,

DAVID BELASCO.

*Many readers may suppose, because Belasco is still living and at the zenith of his career, that it was an easy task to compile and arrange a complete record of his life. The truth is far otherwise. There was once a vast amount of invaluable material for such a record,—comprising a copy of every programme in which his name appeared from 1871 to the end of the theatrical season of 1897-'98, together with every important article about him or his work in the same period, several scores of photographs of him in dramatic characters and many hundreds of interesting letters. But that unique collection, the property and pride of his mother, was destroyed in the great San Francisco earthquake-fire, April 18, 1906; and his dubiousity about exact dates proved to be more than justified. The comprehensive and authoritative Chronology of Belasco's life which is included in this Memoir is, therefore, chiefly the product of Mr. Winter's indefatigable, patient original research and labor: such parts of it as were not made by him were made entirely according to his plan and by his direction, specifying the sources of information to be consulted. And I would specially emphasize the fact that wherever this Memoir may be found to differ*



*from, or conflict with, other accounts of Belasco's career those other accounts are erroneous.*

*The letters which appear in this Memoir were all selected by my father,—excepting a few of his, toward the end, which I have inserted. Mr. Winter requested Belasco to chose from his collection such letters as he would permit to be used, but received from him a reply in which he writes:*

. . . I would be glad to go through my letters for you, as you requested, if I could; but the fact is I am so over-worked just now that I simply can't take the time to do it. I am, therefore, sending over to you eight or nine old letter-books of mine and two boxes of old letters. I really don't know *what* is in them (for I haven't looked at them for years), but I hope you will be able to find something useful and such as you want among them. If not, let me know and I will send over some more. All the other material you ask for in the list which Jefferson left at the theatre last week was destroyed in the [San Francisco] fire. . . . I don't believe there are twelve pictures of me "in character" in existence. I had dozens made when I was young, but I don't know of anybody who has any to-day, except my wife. She has a set of, I think, six, which I will ask her to lend us. . . .

*In assembling originals for pictorial illustration of this work I have been specially aided by Mr. Belasco, who has not only loaned me everything in his own collection for which I have asked but has also obtained*



*for my use many photographs in the Albert Davis Collection, as well as the six very interesting and now, I believe, unique pictures of him, preserved by Mrs. Belasco, in the characters of Hamlet, Marc Antony, King Louis the Eleventh, Uncle Tom, Fagin, and Robert Macaire. For photographs of members of the Theatrical Syndicate I am indebted to my father's friend and mine, Louis V. De Foe, Esq., of New York. My father was not altogether satisfied with the illustrations of his other books: every effort has been made to embellish this one as nearly as possible in the manner in which he would have had it done.*

*On behalf of my father and in accordance with a written note found among his papers I would here make grateful acknowledgment of the courtesy of Mr. Belasco's sister, Mrs. Sarah Mayer; his brother, Mr. Frederick Belasco, and his nephew, Mr. E. B. Mayer, all of San Francisco, who endeavored to answer many inquiries by Mr. Winter and who were able to provide some necessary corroboration of details. Also, I would make acknowledgment of the obliging kindness shown him by the late James Louis Gillis (1857-1917), Librarian of the California State Library at Sacramento, and by his assistants, unknown, who searched for Mr. Winter various old California newspaper files which, otherwise, might have remained inaccessible.*



*For myself, I owe thanks to Mr. Gillis' successor as State Librarian of California, Milton J. Ferguson, Esq.; to William Seymour, Esq., to James A. Madison, Esq., and to the several members of Mr. Belasco's personal staff,—all of whom have assisted me in verifying for my father casts of plays long ago forgotten and in supplying or verifying dates. I wish, also, to thank Captain Joseph H. Coit, formerly Vice-President and manager of Moffat, Yard & Company,—now, I believe, on service somewhere in France,—without whose coöperation this work, perhaps, might not have been undertaken.*

*To Mr. Belasco I owe a debt of lasting gratitude—not only for his unquestioning, instant compliance with every request I have ventured to make of him, but far more for his simple, hearty sympathy in affliction and his great personal kindness, which is not less valued because I know that, primarily, it has been inspired by his reverence and affection for my father.*

*The Indices to this work I am chiefly responsible for. They have been prepared on the model of others made under my father's direction and in large part by him: many of the biographical facts given in them were set down for the purpose by him. I trust that they will be found accurate and useful.*

*The delay in publishing this work has been due in*



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*part to ill-health which compelled me long to neglect it; in part to technical and mechanical difficulties and mischances in its manufacture. I surmise that notwithstanding the great care which has been exercised some minor errors and slips will be found to have crept into this edition:\* if any are observed I shall be glad to have them brought to my attention in order that they may be corrected in future issues.*

JEFFERSON WINTER.

46 Winter Avenue, New Brighton,  
Staten Island, New York.

June 30, 1918.

\*As these pages go to press such an error is noted in matter already printed. Volume One, page 231, *Charles Groves* should be *F. C. Groves*.







## THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO.

### ANCESTRY AND BIRTH.

David Belasco, one of the most singular, characteristic, picturesque, and influential persons who have participated in the theatrical movement in America, is descended from an old Portuguese Hebrew family (the name of which was originally pronounced "Valasco"), members of which emigrated from Portugal to England in the reign of the Portuguese King Emanuel the First (1495-1521), at one time in which reign the Jews in Portugal were cruelly persecuted, so that all of them who could do so fled from that country. His father, Humphrey Abraham Belasco, was a native of England, born in London, December 26, 1830. His mother, whose maiden name was Reina Martin, was also of English nativity, born in London, April 24, 1830. Both were Jews. They were poor and their social position was humble. The father's occupation was that of a harlequin. He was proficient in his calling and he pursued it successfully at various London theatres, but he did not find it remunerative. He wished to improve his condi-



## 2 THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO

tion, and affected, as many others were, by the "gold fever,"—which broke out and soon became epidemic after the discoveries of gold in California (1842-1848), and was almost everywhere acute during 1849 and the early fifties,—he determined to seek his fortune in that apparent Eldorado. This determination was approved by his wife, who, like himself, was a person of strong character and adventurous spirit, and, accordingly, in 1852-'53, they voyaged, in a sailing vessel, to Aspinwall (now Colon), crossed the isthmus to Panama, and went thence, by another sailing vessel, to San Francisco, California, arriving there almost destitute. Their first lodging was in a house, long ago destroyed, in Howard Street, where, in a room in a cellar, July 25, 1858, occurred the birth of their first child, David Belasco, the subject of this Memoir.

### BOYHOOD IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

The residence of those adventurers in San Francisco continued for several years, Humphrey Belasco keeping a general shop and moderately prospering as a tradesman, but about the beginning of 1858 they migrated (travelling by sailing vessel) to the coast town of Victoria, then a trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company,—later (1862)





From an old photograph.

Belasco's Collection.

THE INFANT BELASCO AND HIS PARENTS, 1854

INSCRIPTION:

"Father and Mother and *Me*—during my *first starring*  
engagement.—D. B."

*Father and mother and me —  
during my first starring engagement!*







incorporated a city. There Humphrey Belasco continued in business, as a dealer in tobacco, fur, and other commodities, trading with miners and Indian hunters and trappers, and also he dabbled in real estate speculation and took part in mining operations, joining a party that explored the Cariboo Mines region. He was not fortunate in his real estate and mining ventures, nor did he specially prosper in trade,—though, as Macaulay says of Richardson, the novelist, “he kept his shop and his shop kept him.\*” Humphrey Belasco is mentioned, in a record of that place, as keeping a tobacco shop there, in Yates Street, in 1862. He remained in Victoria for about seven years, and there three of his children were born: Israel, July 25, 1861; Frederick, June 25, 1862, and Walter, January 1, 1864. The elder Belasco was a social favorite, and so considerable was his popularity that he was more than once asked to accept public office,—a distinction which he declined. He is remembered as a modest, lovable person, genial in feeling and manner, a pleasant companion and a clever entertainer in the privacy of his home, and as having been specially fond of quietude.

In Victoria much of David's childhood was

\* The precept occurs in “Poor Richard's Almanac,” “Keep your shop and your shop will keep you.”—W. W.



#### 4 THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO

passed. From his mother, who was intellectual, imaginative, romantic, and of a peculiarly amiable disposition, he received the rudiments of education: she taught him neatness, self-respect, industry, and the importance of acquiring knowledge. I have heard him speak of her, with deep emotion, as the friend from whom he had derived those lessons of courage, energy, perseverance, and arduous labor that have guided him through life. He was early sent to a school called the Colonial, in Victoria, conducted by an Irishman named Burr, remembered as a person whose temper was violent and whose discipline was harsh. Later, he attended a school called the Collegiate, conducted by T. C. Woods, a clergyman. When about seven years old he attracted the attention of a kindly Roman Catholic priest, Father ——— McGuire, then aged eighty-six, who perceived in him uncommon intelligence and precocious talent, and who presently proposed to his parents that the boy should dwell under his care in a monastery and be educated. Strenuous objection to that arrangement was at first made by David's father, sturdily Jewish and strictly orthodox in his religious views; but the mother, more liberal in opinion and more sagaciously provident of the future, assented, and her persuasions, coincident with the wish of



the lad himself, eventually prevailed against the paternal scruples. In the monastery David remained about two and a half years, supervised by Father McGuire, and he made good progress in various studies. The effect of the training to which he was there subjected was exceedingly beneficial: ecclesiastics of the Roman Catholic Church have long been eminent for scholarship and for efficiency in the education of youth: their influence endured, and it is visible in David Belasco's habits of thought, use of mental powers, tireless labor, persistent purpose to excel, and likewise in his unconscious demeanor, and even in his attire. It would have been better for the boy if he had remained longer in the monastic cell and under the guidance of his benevolent protector, but he had inherited a gypsy temperament and a roving propensity, he became discontented with seclusion, and suddenly, without special cause and without explanation, he fled from the monastery and joined a wandering circus, with which he travelled. In that association he was taught to ride horses "bareback" and to perform as a miniature clown. A serious illness presently befell him and, being disabled, he was left in a country town, where he would have died but for the benevolent care of a clown, Walter Kingsley, by name, who remained with him,—obtaining



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a scanty subsistence by clowning and singing in the streets, for whatever charity might bestow,—and nursed him through a malignant fever, only himself to be stricken with it, and to die, just as the boy became convalescent. Meantime Humphrey Belasco, having contrived to trace his fugitive son, came to his rescue and carried him back to Victoria, to a loving mother's care and to his life at school.

### EARLY PROCLIVITY FOR THE THEATRE.

It was about this time, 1862-'68, that David's strong inclination for theatrical pursuits became specially manifest. His mother was fond of poetry, and she, and also his school teachers, had taught him to memorize and recite verses. His parents, the father having been a professional harlequin (one of David's uncles, his namesake, it should be mentioned, was the admired English actor David James [1839-1893], and the whole family was histrionical), naturally sought the Theatre and affiliated as much as they could with whatever players came to Victoria or were resident there as members of the local stock company. David had been "carried on," at the Victoria Theatre Royal, as *Cora's Child*, in "Pizarro,"—that once famous play,





*From an old photograph.*

*The Albert Davis Collection.*

**JULIA DEAN (HAYNE)**







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adapted from Augustus Frederick Ferdinand von Kotzebue's "Die Spanier in Peru," and rewritten by Sheridan. That incident probably occurred when the talented and beautiful Julia Dean (1830-1868), in the season of 1857-'58, first acted in Victoria,—"*Pizarro*" having been in her repertory and *Cora* one of the parts in which she was distinguished. In June, 1856, Julia Dean was lessee of the American Theatre, San Francisco; she made several tours in Pacific Coast towns. Belasco remembers having played the boy, *William*, in "East Lynne," with her, but that appearance must have occurred later, because "East Lynne," as a novel, was not published till 1861, and it was not launched earlier as a play. Julia Dean returned to the East in 1858, but made at least one subsequent tour of the Western States.

### MEMORIES OF JULIA DEAN.

Belasco's random recollections of the actors with whom he was brought in contact while in California and other parts of the West are those of a youthful enthusiast, generally injudicious, frequently incorrect, sometimes informative, always indicative of amiability. Julia Dean, who held little David in her arms when he was a child, and with whom he



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appeared in boyhood, remains to this day an object of his homage. She was one of the best actresses of her time. I saw her first at the Boston Museum, in 1854, as *Julia*, in "The Hunchback," later in other characters, and was charmed by her exquisite beauty and her winning personality. I saw her for the last time, in New York, in July, 1867, at the Broadway Theatre (the house which had been Wallack's Lyceum), where she was playing,—with peculiar skill and fine effect,—*Laura Fairlie* and *Anne Catherick*, in "The Woman in White." She was a scion of a theatrical family. Her maternal grandfather, Samuel Drake (1772-1847), an English actor, was highly esteemed on our Stage a hundred years ago. Her mother, Julia Drake (first Mrs. Thomas Fosdick, later Mrs. Edmund Dean), was a favorite in the theatres of the West and was accounted exceptionally brilliant. Julia Dean went on the stage (1845) at Louisville, Kentucky, made her first appearance in New York in 1846, at the old Bowery Theatre, and continued in practice of her art till the end of her life. She was lovely in person and not less lovely in character. Her figure was tall and slender, her complexion fair, her hair chestnut-brown, her voice sweet, her movement graceful, and she had sparkling hazel eyes. The existing portraits of her give no adequate reflection of her



beauty. In acting, her intelligence was faultless, her demeanor natural, her feeling intense. Her every action seemed spontaneous. Her imagination was quick, she possessed power and authority, and she could thrill her audience with fine bursts of passion,—as notably she did in the Fifth Act of “The Hunchback”; but, as I recall her, she enticed chiefly by her intrinsic loveliness. Her performance of Knowles’s *Julia* was perfection. She played many exacting parts,—such as *Bianca*, in “Fazio”; *Mrs. Haller*, in “The Stranger”; *Margaret Elmore*, in “Love’s Sacrifice”; *Griseldis*, and *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. She was the primary *Norma*, in Epes Sargent’s “Priestess,” which was first acted in Boston, and she was the primary *Leonor*, in George Henry Boker’s tragedy of “Leonor de Guzman,” first produced at the original Broadway Theatre, New York, April 25, 1854. Whatever she did was earnestly done. Her soul was in her art, and she never permitted anything to degrade it. A marriage contracted (1855) with Dr. Arthur Hayne,—son of Robert Young Hayne, United States Senator from South Carolina, whose semi-seditious advocacy of “State Rights” prompted Daniel Webster’s great oration in the Senate (1830),—resulted unhappily, somewhat embittering her mind and impairing the bloom of her artistic style. She obtained a divorce



## 10 THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO

and (1866) became the wife of James Cooper. She died suddenly, in childbirth, March 6, 1868. At her funeral, two days later, at Christ Church, Fifth Avenue and Thirty-first Street, New York, the service was performed by Rev. Ferdinand Cartwright Ewer (1826-1888), a noted Episcopalian ritualist, who in early life had been a dramatic critic,—one of competent intelligence, good judgment, and considerate candor,—associated with the newspaper press of San Francisco, had known her in the season of her California triumphs, and well knew her worth both as actress and woman.

### REMOVAL TO SAN FRANCISCO.

Young David Belasco was frequently utilized for infantile and juvenile parts at the Victoria Theatre. In 1864, when Charles Kean, in his farewell "tour round the world," filled a short engagement there, the lad appeared as the little *Duke of York*, in "King Richard III." His age was then eleven, but he was diminutive and therefore he suited that part. During Kean's engagement he also appeared as a super in "Pauline." About 1865 Humphrey Belasco, his fortunes not improving as he had hoped, removed his family from Victoria and established residence in San Francisco, where he opened a fruit





From photographs by Brady.



The Albert Davis Collection.

# "THE KEANS"

CHARLES JOHN KEAN  
(1811-1868)

ELLEN TREE, MRS. KEAN  
(1805-1880)

Taken during their last American tour, 1864-'65, soon after Belasco appeared with them  
in "King Richard III"







shop, fraternized with players at the theatres, gaining friends and popularity, and where he spent the rest of his life. David was sent to the Lincoln Grammar School, which for some time he continued to attend. There he was studious, and there, in particular, he was trained in elocution,—that art having been specially esteemed by his teachers. Among the persons who, at various times, instructed him in elocution were Dr. Ira G. Hoitt, Miss ——— James, Professor Ebenezer Knowlton, and Miss “Nelly” Holbrook, once an actress of distinction (she figures among the oldtime female players of *Hamlet* and *Romeo*), mother of the contemporary actor (1917) Holbrook Blinn. The boy’s talent for declamation had been quickly perceived, and a judicious endeavor was made to foster and develop it. Among the poems he was taught to recite, and which, in the esteem of his teachers, he recited well, were “The Vagabonds,” by John Townsend Trowbridge; “The Maniac,” by Matthew Gregory Lewis; “Curfew Must Not Ring To-night,” by Rosa Hartwick Thorpe, and “Bernardo del Carpio,” by Felicia Hemans. Those poems were well chosen for the purpose in view, because each of them contains a dramatic element propitious to a declaimer.



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### GLIMPSES OF BOYHOOD.

At one time, in his boyhood, at Victoria, Belasco was adopted by the local Fire Department as "a mascot," and when parades of the firemen occurred,—the hook and ladder vehicle being drawn with ropes by the men,—the little lad either walked at the head of the line or rode, perched high upon the wagon, arrayed in a red shirt, black trousers and boots, and a fire-helmet. After removing, with his parents, from Victoria to San Francisco, he was sent to a school called the Fourth Street, and it was from there that he went to the Lincoln. He took the honors for penmanship, being assigned to keep the school "rolls," and sometimes his "compositions" were framed and hung in the halls, for the edification of other pupils. There, also, he was awarded a gold medal, as being the best reader and performer of Tragedy,—a prize which he pawned for the benefit of the family,—while his chum, James O. Barrows, obtained a silver medal for special cleverness in Comedy. As a schoolboy he was particularly fond of reading "dime novels," which, for convenience of surreptitious perusal, he customarily concealed in his boots. For some time after their return to San Francisco the Belascos dwelt in a house in Harrison Street; later, they resided in Louisa Street.



The first play, apparently, that David wrote was concocted later, after the family had removed to No. 174 Clara Street, and was entitled "Jim Black; or, The Regulator's Revenge!" Another of his early pieces of dramatic writing (and, perhaps, it may have been the first) was called "The Roll of the Drum." Belasco is very positive that he wrote this soon after the death of Abraham Lincoln (April 15, 1865),—at which time he was less than twelve years old. His recollection regarding this may be correct; there is no doubt that he was an extraordinarily precocious child, and such children do, sometimes, write astonishing compositions even at an earlier age than twelve. Belasco is equally positive that his play, while it was, at various times, acted outside of San Francisco, was never played in that city. A play of the same name was performed, by Mme. Methua-Scheller and associates, at Maguire's Opera House, for the benefit of "Sue" Robinson, on November 26, 1869, announced as "The new military drama"; this was not Belasco's play, but one wholly different from it. Belasco's custom, as a lad, was to keep a table by his bedside, with writing materials, candle and matches upon it, in order to note at once any idea that might occur to him as likely to be of service in his theatrical work, and he was often rewarded for this precaution. In



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all my study of theatrical history I have not encountered a person more downright daft, more completely saturated in every fibre of his being, with passion for the Stage and things dramatical than was young David Belasco.

### SCHOOL DAYS IN SAN FRANCISCO.

The following extract from a letter dated December 25, 1916, addressed to Belasco by one of his schoolmates, E. F. Lennon, Esqr., now (1917) City Clerk of Red Bluff, Tehama County, California, provides a glimpse of him as a schoolboy in San Francisco:

“ . . . We drifted away from each other in old 'Frisco, in the early seventies, and chance has kept us distant from each other. . . . You and I lived near each other, in the old days,—you in Louisa Street, I, a block away, in Shipley. We went to the old Lincoln School and travelled through the same grades . . . and in them all we were together. Do you remember when you and I started a Circulating Library, in your home? You had quite a collection of books and I had a number also, and we put them on shelves in your house. Not long after a fire came along and destroyed our good intentions. . . . We also had our theatrical performances, in the basement of my home, when the price of admission was a gunny-sack or a beer bottle. You were the star actor and our presentations were often attended by the grown-ups. . . . I remember when Queen



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Emma, of the Hawaiian Islands, visited our school, and the entire body of students were marched upstairs to the big hall to see and entertain her. You recited your famous selection, "The Madman" [Lewis's "The Maniac"]. Another pupil and myself did a little better than the bunch: I think the other boy's name was Moore. He and I kissed the Queen, and it was the talk of the school for some time. She took the kisses all right, and we got a lecture for our audacity, and perhaps a licking. . . ."

### HARD TIMES IN EARLY DAYS.

The removal of the Belasco family from Victoria to San Francisco was not attended by material prosperity, and for several years the family suffered the pinch of poverty. Young David keenly felt the necessity of helping his parents, and by every means in his power he tried to do so. His conduct, in those troublous years, as it has been made known to me, not only in conversations with himself, but in communications by his surviving relatives, provides a remarkable example of filial devotion. As a lad, in Victoria, he had shown surprising facility in learning the Indian language and frequently had acted as interpreter for Indians who traded with his father; also, he had manifested that lively and shrewd propensity for trading which is peculiar to the Jew. As a lad, in San Francisco, while attending school as often as possible, he regularly



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remained at home, after the morning session, every Friday, in order to assist his mother in washing clothes for the family, a labor which, being then of low stature, he could perform only by standing on a large box, thus being enabled to reach into the washtub. He would also help his mother in the drudgery of the kitchen, and then often do for her the necessary household marketing for the coming week; and he would make up, every week, the records and accounts of his father's business in the shop. When neither at school nor occupied at home he would seek and perform any odd piece of work by which a trifle might be earned. He was by nature a book-lover and acquisitive of information: he had access to several public libraries, but he craved ownership of books, and from time to time he earned a little money for the purchase of them by recitations, sometimes given in the homes of his friends, sometimes at church entertainments, sometimes at Irish-American Hall and other similar places. For each of such recitations he received two dollars, and on some nights he recited two, three, or four times. As he grew older, especially after 1868, his efforts to obtain employment at theatres grew more and more constant, and, as already said, they were occasionally successful. His activities, indeed, were such that it is a wonder his health was



not permanently impaired,—but he was possessed of exceptional vitality, which happily has endured. Once he worked for a while as a chore-boy in a cigar store and factory, where he washed windows, scrubbed floors, and rendered whatever menial service was required, opening the place at morning and closing it at evening. That was a hard experience, but it led to something better, because the keeper of the cigar-shop, taking note of him and his ways, procured for him a better situation, which for some time he held, in a bookstore. There he had access to many books, and he eagerly improved every opportunity of reading. A chief recreation of his consisted in haunting the wharves, gazing at the ships, and musing and wondering about the strange tropical lands from which they came and to which presently they would sail away.

#### THE SENTIMENTAL STOWAWAY.

There was one singular consequence of Belasco's interest in ships and his somewhat extravagant and sentimental fancy which is worth special record. The tragedian John McCullough used frequently to recite, with pathetic effect, a ballad, once widely known, by Arthur Matthison (1826-1883), called "The Little Hero,"—originally named "The Stow-



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away," and first published in "Watson's Art Journal," New York. The earliest record I have been able to find of McCullough's delivery of this ballad in San Francisco states that he recited it on the occasion of a performance given for the benefit of Lorraine Rogers, director of the California Theatre, on November 30, 1869. Then or, perhaps, earlier (since McCullough was in San Francisco as early as 1866) Belasco heard him, and his febrile fancy, already superheated by excessive reading of morbid sensation stories, was so fired by the recitation that he felt impelled to submit himself to a similar experience. In his "Story" he gives the following account of his adventure as a Stowaway:

"The story of 'The Little Hero' related the adventures of a stowaway who was discovered in his hiding-place by the sailors when they were in mid-ocean, and the lad was forced to work, and was beaten and starved into the bargain. As a boy I had read a like tale, which had so stirred my imagination that I used to dream of it by night, and in my spare time by day I would wander along the wharves to gaze at the shipping. How it happened I don't quite know, but my feet led me on board a boat and, simply as an experiment, I hid myself. Then a rash notion came into my head! Suppose I stayed where I was and put into practice what the poem had so graphically described! For thirty hours I crouched behind my sable bulwark, and after interminable sailing it seemed to me about time that I was discovered, so I made myself visible. I was dragged up on





**JOHN MCCULLOUGH**

*"This was the noblest Roman of them all!"*

**- Julius Caesar**

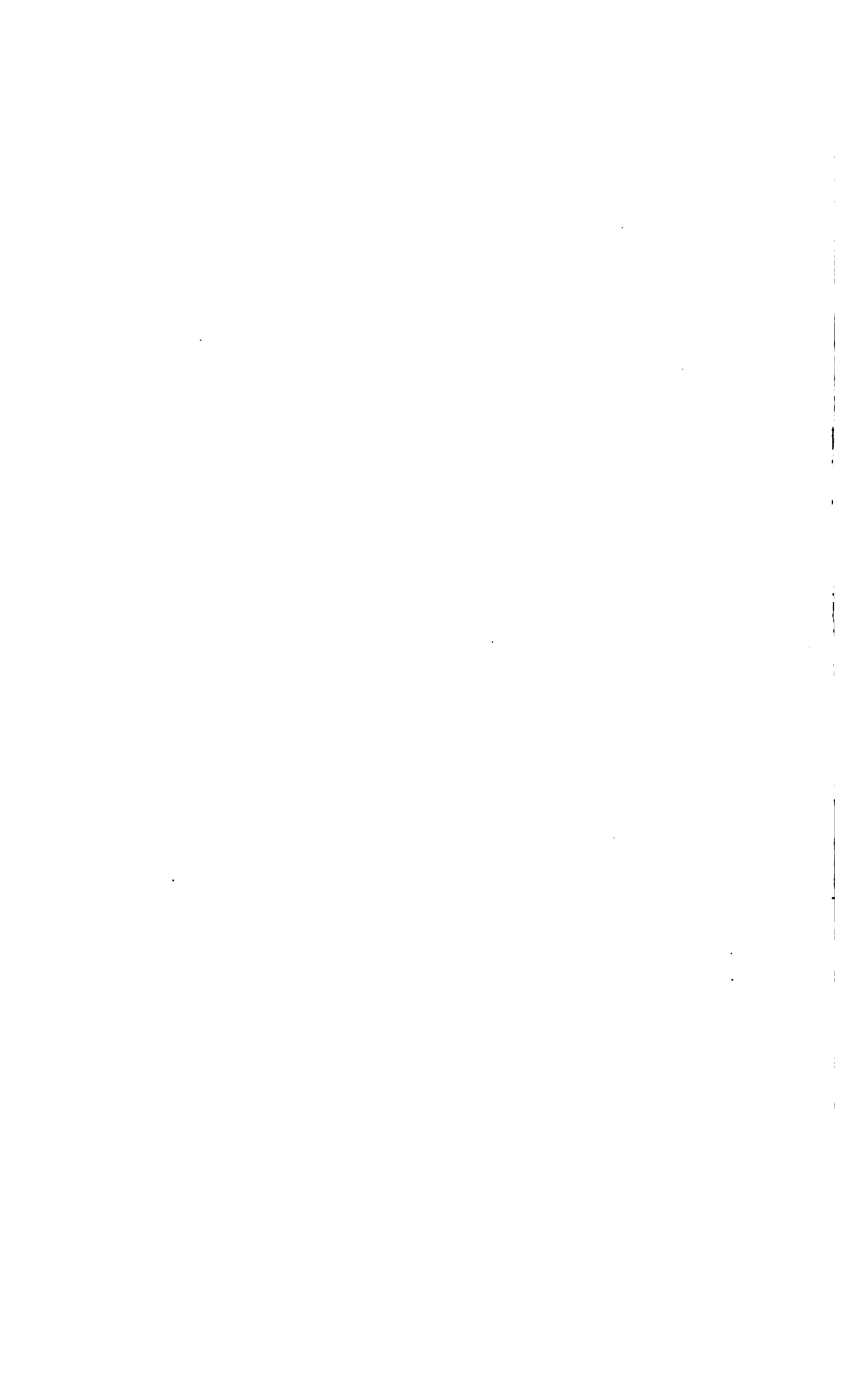














## THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO 19

deck with no tender touch, and there the analogy between the little hero and myself vanished. The captain of the schooner was a friend of my father's. 'Aren't you Humphrey's boy?' he asked, and I was obliged to confess to my identity. 'Take him downstairs and wash him,' the captain ordered, for contact with the coal had made me look like a blackamoor; despite my protestations that this was not the correct treatment for a stowaway, I was taken below. 'Give him something to eat,' he called after us, but I was as obdurate as a militant suffragette in the matter of food. Later on, when I was 'swabbed down,' I was taken on deck again, where I was obliged to tell the captain my story, and the reasons for my escapade. 'I'll be blazed if I lick you as you seem to want!' said he. I was reciting the story to the queer group gathered about me, when I suddenly realized that my old enemy seasickness was creeping over me. 'Let me scrub the floor,' I pleaded. 'They always do.' At first they laughingly refused, but presently, to humor me, I was put to work on a brass rail that needed shining. However, the smell of the oil polish hastened my catastrophe. I was put to bed and very glad to be there. From Vancouver I was shipped home, where I found my mother rejoiced to get me back. She was not so perturbed as she might have been, because the poor lady was used to my 'disappearances' in search of adventure and the romantic. She always knew that I was doing something or other to gain new impressions, and her heart was wonderfully attuned to mine."

### A BOHEMIAN INTERLUDE.

Belasco left school in June, 1871. In August, 1878, he married. It has been impossible to fix



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precise dates for some of his proceedings within that period of about two years and three months. Though he steadily, if at first slowly, progressed, and though specific records of his doings become more and more frequent as the years pass in review, it is not until about 1876-'79 that they are numerous. During all, or almost all, of the period indicated (1871-1879),—more so in the earlier part than in the later,—he was a nomadic bohemian. At first he often roamed the streets at night and would visit the saloons and low "dives" which abounded in San Francisco, and recite before the rough frequenters of those resorts,—sometimes giving "The Maniac," sometimes "Bernardo del Carpio," sometimes "shockers" of his own composition (things which he wrote with facility, on any current topic that attracted his attention), and gather whatever money might be thrown to him by those unruly but often liberal auditors. On a Sunday he was sometimes fortunate enough to earn as much as ten or twelve dollars by his recitals. Another means of gain that he employed was the expedient of volunteer press reporting. He would visit every gambling "den," opium "joint," hospital, and police-station to which he could obtain access (the morgue was one of his familiar resorts), and write brief stories of whatever scenes and occurrences he might



observe, to be sold to any newspaper that would pay for them,—when he was lucky enough to make a sale. In talking to me about his youthful days, as he has done in the course of a friendly acquaintance extending over many years, he has particularly dwelt on the intense, often morbid, and quite irresistible interest which, in early life, he felt in everything extraordinary, emotional, sensational, dramatic,—everything that might be called phenomenal. “As a young fellow,” he once said to me, “I visited the scene of every murder that I heard of—and they were many. I knew every infamous and dangerous place in San Francisco. Once I tried to interfere between a blackguard and his woman, whom he was abusing, and I got a bullet along the forehead for my trouble: I have the scar of it to this day. It was freely predicted that I would end in state’s prison, probably on the gallows. Only my dear mother seemed to understand me. My adventures and wanderings (‘Wandering Feet,’ she used to call me) worried her, which I grieve to think of now, but she always took my part. ‘Davy is all right,’ she used to say; ‘leave him alone; he’s only curious about life, and wants to see everything with those big, dark eyes of his.’ She was right; and, if I didn’t see everything, I saw a good deal.”

The miscellaneous knowledge that young Belasco



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accumulated in observation of "the seamy side" of life by night, in one of the most vicious, turbulent, and perilous cities in the world,—which San Francisco certainly was, in his juvenile time,—was of much use to him when, later, he became employed as a hack-writer of sensation melodramas, in the theatres of that city and other cities of the West.

### BELASCO'S EARLIEST ASSOCIATIONS WITH THE THEATRE IN SAN FRANCISCO

It is not possible to furnish an entirely full, clear, chronological account of Belasco's earliest relations with the Theatre in San Francisco. Various current sketches of his career which I have examined either give no details as to this part of it, or make assertions about it which I have ascertained to be incorrect. The subject is not explicitly treated in his autobiographical fragment, "The Story of My Life," a formless, rambling narrative, obviously, to a discerning reader, evolved from discursive memory, without consultation of records or necessary specification of dates or verification of statements, and which I have found to be, in many essential particulars, inaccurate. Few persons possess an absolutely trustworthy memory of dates,





From an old photograph.

Belasco's Collection.

**BELASCO'S PARENTS**

**HUMPHREY ABRAHAM, AND REINA MARTIN, BELASCO, ABOUT 1865**







and Belasco is not one of them. His recollections of his boyhood and specially of his early association with the Theatre in San Francisco are sometimes interesting and in a general way authentic, and certainly they are believed by him to be invariably correct; but careful research of San Francisco newspapers of the period implicated, and of other records, discovers that frequently they are hazy, confused, and erroneous. "He who has not made the experiment," says Dr. Johnson, "or is not accustomed to require *rigorous accuracy* from himself, will scarcely believe how much a few hours take from certainty of knowledge and distinctness of imagery." How much more must the lapse of many years take from memory! According to Belasco's recollection, his first formal appearance on the San Francisco Stage was made while he was yet a pupil at the Lincoln Grammar School in that city, when Mary Wells (Mrs. Richard Stœples, 1829-1878) was (as he alleges) filling an engagement at the Metropolitan Theatre, in a play called "The Lioness of Nubia." Mary Wells was an English actress, well known and much respected on the New York Stage about fifty years ago. She made her first appearance in this country at Albany, in 1850, and in 1856 she appeared at Laura Keene's Theatre, New York, as *Mme. Deschappelles*, in "The Lady of



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Lyons." She did not figure as a star: her "line" was old women: there is no record of her appearance at the Metropolitan Theatre, nor of her appearance anywhere in San Francisco, until April 4, 1874, when she acted with "The Lingard Combination," at the Opera House (opened as Shields' Opera House), playing *Mme. Dumesnil*, in an English translation of Octave Feuillet's "La Tentation." There is, moreover, no play entitled "The Lioness of Nubia." There is, however, a play called "The Lion of Nubia," and there was an actress, of the soubrette order, named Minnie Wells, who appeared in that play at the Metropolitan Theatre, December 16, 1872, acting the central part, *Harry Trueheart*. The play was billed as "The Great Eastern Sensational Military Drama, 'The Lion of Nubia,' introducing Banjo Solos, Banjo Duets," etc. This play was thus advertised in San Francisco newspapers, December 16 to 22, 1872. John R. Woodard and Frank Rea, both of whom Belasco specifies as having been in the performance he supposes to have been given by "Mary Wells," were members of the company supporting Minnie Wells at the Metropolitan in December, 1872, and it was with the latter and in "The Lion of Nubia" that Belasco made the appearance which he has misremembered and inadvertently misstated in his published "Story."



The part that he played, *Lieutenant Victor*, was practically that of a super. He was billed on that occasion as "Walter Kingsley," the name of the circus clown who had befriended him in his childhood. It was a common expedient of the time for actors to adopt names not theirs when embarking on a theatrical career, and it pleased Belasco, for no special reason beyond a boyish whim, to do likewise. He used the name of Walter Kingsley for a little while, but his doing so distressed his mother and therefore he presently dropped it and wisely reverted to his own. In the early records that I have found it generally appears as "D. Belasco," and often various superfluous initials are inserted through compositors' errors. Belasco's account of the appearance with Miss Wells, as given to me, specifies that he had one line to speak, which was "Perhaps the stress of the weather has driven them further up the coast"; that his schoolmates, in large number, were in the gallery; that his appearance was hailed by them with applause; that they clamorously demanded he should recite "The Maniac"; that their boisterous behavior interrupted the performance and annoyed the actress, and that she caused Woodard to discharge him.

It *certainly* is true that Belasco was carried on the stage, in childhood, at Victoria, that later he



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there "went on" for the little *Duke of York*, in "King Richard III.," with Charles Kean,—as previously mentioned,—and that he made informal appearances, as declaimer and as super, in the theatres of San Francisco, while yet a schoolboy,—all those juvenile essays being cumulative toward his final embarkation on the career of actor, dramatist, and theatrical manager: thus, on December 20, 1868, he participated in a public entertainment, given at Lincoln Hall, by pupils of the Lincoln Grammar School, reciting "The Banishment of Catiline" and "The Maniac" (the latter a recitation he was often called on to make and with which, at one time or another, he won several prizes); in the "Catiline" recital he appeared in a costume comprising his father's underdrawers and undershirt and a toga of cheap cloth. On November 24, 1869, he appeared, for a night or two, with Mme. Marie Methua-Scheller (18—1878), at Maguire's Opera House, as one of the newsboys, in Augustin Daly's "Under the Gas-Light," and in the course of that performance he played on a banjo and danced: on November 27 he "went on," at the same theatre, as an *Indian Brave*, in a presentment by Joseph Proctor (1816-1897) of "The Jibbenainosay." "I was much too small," he told me, "but Proctor kept me because I gave such fine warwhoops." On



March 17, 1871, at the Metropolitan Theatre, he assumed the character of an *Indian Chieftain*, in "Professor Hager's Great Historical Allegory and Tableaux, 'The Great Republic,'" which prodigy was performed by a company of "more than 400 young ladies and gentlemen" of various schools in the city, and for the benefit of those schools: it was several times exhibited: in the Second Part thereof he personated *War*. On June 2, following, he figured prominently in "competitive declamations" given at Platt's Hall, by pupils of the Lincoln School, and also in an amateur theatrical performance, on the same occasion, appearing as *High-flyer Nightshade*, in "The Freedom of the Press." Hager's "The Great Republic" was a pleasing entertainment of its kind, and, after the close of the Lincoln School, Hager arranged to give it in Sacramento, and obtained permission to take with him to that city young Belasco and his friend, James O. Barrows, who were considered the bright particular stars of the performance. They appeared there, in the "Allegory," April 15, 1871, "for the benefit of the Howard Association." "I consider Professor Hager to have been my first manager," says Belasco,—why, I do not know.

On August 28, 1869, Lotta (Charlotte Crabtree, whom John Brougham described as "the dramatic



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cocktail") acted, for the first time in San Francisco, *Fire-Fly*, in a play of the same name by Edmund Falconer, based on Ouida's novel of "Under Two Flags." She was, then and later, exceedingly popular in it. Belasco and other stage-smitten youths organized an amateur theatrical association, called, in honor of the elfin Lotta, "The Fire-Fly Social and Dramatic Club." As a member of that association Belasco played several parts. On June 22, 1871, he appeared with other fire-flies, at Turnverein Hall (Bush Street, near Powell), in ——— Sutter's drama of "A Life's Revenge; or, Two Loves for One Heart,"—acting *Fournet, Minister of Finance*. "The San Francisco Figaro," noting this entertainment (the fifth given by the "Fire-Flies"), remarked, "Among those who will take part in its representation is David Belasco, his first appearance in leading business"; and in a review of the performance a critical writer in the same paper recorded that "David Belasco displayed much power."

### AN EARLY FRIEND.—W. H. SEDLEY-SMITH.

Soon after the opening of the California Theatre (1869) Belasco, who attended every theatrical performance to which he could gain admission, had the good fortune to meet John McCullough, and, pleas-





From an old photograph.

Author's Collection.

**WILLIAM HENRY SEDLEY-SMITH**







ing that genial actor, he was from time to time employed to hear him say the words of parts which he was committing to memory. In this way, by McCullough's favor, he was enabled to see many performances at the California, sometimes from a gallery seat, sometimes from the stage, and in this way, also, he chanced to make another auspicious acquaintance, that of the sterling old actor William Henry Sedley-Smith, who took a strong fancy to Belasco, perceiving his native ability, talked with him, became genuinely interested in the romantic, enthusiastic lad, and gave him valuable advice, encouragement, and assistance.

To the present generation of playgoers that veteran actor has ceased to be even a name (the present generation of playgoers being, according to my observation of it, specially remarkable for its vast and comprehensive ignorance of theatrical history), but in other years his name was one to conjure with, and to the few persons extant who cherish memories of our Stage in the eighteen-fifties it recalls a delightful reality. There are players whose individuality is so vital, so redolent of strength and joy, that the idea of death is never associated with them. Like great poetic thoughts, they enjoy an immortal youth in the imagination, and to hear that they are dead is to suffer the shock of something seeming



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strange and unnatural as well as grimly sad. Such an actor was Sedley-Smith. Robust, rosy, stately, with a rich, ringing voice, a merry laugh, and a free and noble courtesy of demeanor, he lives in my remembrance as a perfect incarnation of generous life,—glad in its strength and diffusive of gladness and strength all around him. His talents were versatile. He played all parts well and in some he was superlatively excellent. There has been no *Sir Oliver Surface* on the modern Stage to be compared with his. It came upon the duplicity and foul sentimentalism of the scheming *Joseph* like a burst of sunshine on a dirty fog, and the gladness that it inspired in the breast of the sympathetic spectator was of the kind that brings tears into the eyes. The man who inspired the personation was felt to be genuine—a type of nature's nobility. His *Old Dorn-ton*, in "The Road to Ruin," was a stately, pathetic type of character, animated by what seems, after all, the best of human emotions,—paternal love. He could impart an impressive dignity even to the fur-trimmed anguish of the sequestered *Stranger*.

Sedley-Smith's professional career covered a period of more than fifty years. He began at the foot of the ladder and he mounted to a pinnacle of solid excellence and sound reputation. He was born, December 4, 1806, near Montgomery, in Wales.



His father was an officer in the British Army and was killed in battle in one of the engagements, under Wellington, of the Peninsular War. His father's brother, also a soldier, fought at Waterloo, was twice wounded there, and became a Knight Commander of the Bath. It will be seen that this actor had an ancestry of courage and breeding. He was a posthumous child, and the widowed mother married again,—thus, unwittingly, imposing on her boy the misfortune of an unhappy home. The stepfather and the child were soon at variance. One day, the lad being only fourteen years old, a contention occurred between them, which ended in his being locked into his chamber. At night he got out of a window and escaped, leaving home forever. To earn his living he joined a company of strolling players, and to avoid detection and recapture he adopted the name of Smith, by which name he was ever after professionally known, though in private affairs he used his true name, Sedley.

The early part of his career was full of vicissitude and trouble. He was not one of those dreamers who think themselves commissioned to clutch at a grasp that proficiency in a most difficult art which scarcely rewards even the faithful and loving labor of a lifetime. He chose to learn his profession by study and work—and he did so. His first appear-



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ance on the stage was made at Shrewsbury, and some of his earlier successes were gained at Glasgow. He came to America in 1827 and appeared at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, as *Jeremy Diddler*, in "Raising the Wind." His most valuable reputation was won in Boston, where he first appeared in 1828, at the Tremont Theatre, as *Rolando*, in "The Honeymoon." In 1836 he managed Pelby's National Theatre in that city, and from 1843 to 1860 he was stage manager of the Boston Museum. He married, shortly after his arrival in America, Miss Eliza Riddle (1808?-1861), in her time one of the most sparkling, bewitching, and popular performers of Comedy that our Stage has known. His first performance in New York occurred at the Chatham Street Theatre, November 3, 1840, when he acted *Edgar* to the *King Lear* of Junius Brutus Booth. The public also saw him at that time as *Laertes*, *Gratiano*, and *Marc Antony*. His last professional appearance in New York was made at the Winter Garden, May 6, 1865, for the benefit of his daughter, Mary Sedley, known to contemporary playgoers as Mrs. Sol. Smith. Later, he went to San Francisco, where he immediately became a favorite—and he deserved his favor and his fame, because his art was intellectual, truthful, conscientious, significant with thought and purpose, and warm with emotion. He





Courtesy Miss Blanche Bates.

**MRS. FRANK MARK BATES**



The Albert Davis Collection.

**SALLIE HINCKLEY**

*From old photographs*







died, in San Francisco, January 17, 1872, in the sixty-sixth year of his age, leaving no work undone that he could do and therefore ending in the fulness of time. He was acquainted with grief, but there was one sorrow he escaped,—he never knew “how dull it is to pause.”

It is obvious that no influence could have been more helpful to the eager, ingenuous, stage-struck Belasco than that of this sturdy, experienced, grand old actor and director, attracted and pleased by the fervor of a schoolboy seeking ingress to the Theatre. Belasco's assurance that he wrote a good hand when he was a boy, however difficult that may be to believe now, is correct (I have independently ascertained that he took a prize for penmanship at the Lincoln School), and Smith,—who was stage manager of the California Theatre,—gave him odd pieces of work to do making fair copies of prompt-books of plays produced at the California, and also, from time to time, employed him to “go on” in the mobs, crowds, etc. To him Belasco confided his ambition to act *Hamlet*, *Iago*, and romantic characters, and by him he was advised to throw away ambition of that kind, physical exility making his success improbable (“you would need to be a head taller,” the veteran assured him), and to devote himself to what are termed “character parts” (miscalled by that designation,



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every part being a *character* part: "eccentric" is the quality really meant) and the study of stage management. If Smith had lived a little longer Belasco probably would have had better opportunity at the California Theatre, but the old man died before the youth had been more than about six months embarked on his professional theatrical career. Nevertheless, he owes much to the instruction and advice of that wise and kind friend.

### ADOPTION OF THE STAGE.

Belasco's actual adoption of the dramatic calling as a means of livelihood, as nearly as the fact can be determined, occurred on July 10, 1871, near the close of his eighteenth year, when he acted a minor part in a play called "Help," by Frederick G—— Marsden, which was presented with Joseph Murphy (1832-1915) in its central part. This actor had been for some time a favorite minstrel and variety performer in San Francisco, generally billed as "Joe" Murphy (his real name was Donnelly), and had made his first appearance in this play of "Help," May 8, 1871, at Wood's Museum, New York, acting *Ned Daly*, an Irish comedy character, shown under several aliases and in various amusing and otherwise effec-



tive situations. Murphy's professional associates at the Metropolitan, among whom Belasco was thus launched upon actual theatrical employment, were John R. Woodard, J. H. Hardie, J. C. McGuire, W. C. Dudley, Frank Rea, H. Swift, George Hinckley, R. A. Wilson, J. H. Vinson, Mrs. F. M. Bates (mother of that fine actress Blanche Bates, so widely and rightly popular in our time), Mrs. Frank Rea, Sallie A. Hinckley, Carrie Lipsis, Jennie Mandeville, Susie Soulé, and Ada Shattuck. Belasco, at first, was a super, but later he was provided with a few words. His school days had now come to an end, and from the time of his appearance in "Help" he continued, irregularly but persistently, and at last successfully, in the service of the Theatre.

BELASCO'S THEATRICAL NOVITIATE.

Belasco believes that soon after his appearance with Murphy, in "Help," he was associated with the Chapman Sisters, but he is again mistaken. Murphy was at the Metropolitan in July, 1872. There is no record of an appearance of the Chapman Sisters there between that time and March 5, 1878, on which latter date a "Grand Re-Opening of the Metropolitan Theatre" occurred, under the



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direction of John Woodard. That "re-opening" was announced thus:

"The want of a People's Theatre having long been felt in this community, the management has determined to present their patrons a First Class Theatre with First Class Stars and a First Class Company, with prices of admission placed within the reach of all.

### PRICES:

Dress Circle . . . . .	75 cents.
Orchestra . . . . .	50 cents.
Gallery . . . . .	25 cents.

"The Talented and Beautiful Chapman Sisters will appear in [H. J.] Byron's splendid burlesque, 'Little Don Giovanni; or, Leperello and the Stone Statue.' Performance to begin with 'Ici on Parle Français.'"

Belasco was a member of the Metropolitan Company at that time, having appeared five days earlier, in a performance by way of "A Grand Complimentary Benefit to Marian Mordaunt," with, among others, Alice Harrison, D. C. Anderson, Owen Marlowe, James C. Williamson, Henry Edwards, Henry Courtaine, John Woodard, and Charles E. Allen,—those players having been assembled from several companies. The bill included "A Morning Call," "The Colleen Bawn," and the First and Second acts of "Darling." Belasco, on the occasion





From old photographs.



Belasco's Collection.

## THE CHAPMAN SISTERS

ELLA CHAPMAN

BLANCHE CHAPMAN







of that benefit, played *Peter Bowbells*, in "The Illustrious Stranger." In the opening bill of the Chapman Sisters, "Little Don Giovanni," Belasco acted the *First Policeman*. Other plays in which the Chapmans appeared during that engagement were "Checkmate," March 21; "Schermmerhorn's Boy," April 2; "The Wonderful Scamp; or, Aladdin No. 2," and "The Statue Lover," April 8; "Pluto," April 15; and "The Beauty and the Brigands." In those plays Belasco acted, respectively, *Strale*, *Reuben*, the *Genius of the Ring*, *Peter True*, the *First Fury*, and *Mateo*, the *Landlord*. "A Kiss in the Dark" and "A Happy Pair" were also played at the Metropolitan at this time, and probably he appeared in them, but I have not found specification of his doing so. The Chapman Sisters, Blanche and Ella, were daughters of an English actor, Henry Chapman (1822-1865), and were handsome and proficient players of burlesque. One of their most successful vehicles was "The Gold Demon." Belasco appeared in it with them (March 18, 1878), as *Prince Saucilita*, and made up and played in imitation of a local eccentricity, known as "Emperor" Norton. His performance, practically a caricature, was considered clever and it elicited considerable commendation. "The Figaro" critic wrote of him: "D. Belasco took the house by storm with his make-up for



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'Emperor' Norton, which was quite a feature of the piece." Actors have often exhibited theatrical travesties of anomalous individuals: Samuel Foote (1720-1777), on the old English Stage, frequently did so: sometimes such exhibitions have proved attractive to the public and largely remunerative: generally they are trivial and contemptible. Thomas D. Rice (1808-1860), the actor who carried Joseph Jefferson, as a child, upon the stage, in 1838,—the first time he was ever seen there,—gained wealth and popularity by copying the grotesque behavior of an old negro named "Jim" Crow, who had been a slave and who was well known to residents of Louisville, Kentucky, about 1828-'29. Edwin Booth, in his novitiate, made a "hit" in San Francisco, about 1852-'58, by imitating a local notoriety named Plume. It did not, however, in his case, lead on to fortune,—nor did it in that of young Belasco as "Emperor" Norton. His remuneration was, for a long time, extremely small. While employed at the Metropolitan Theatre he earned six dollars a week, extra, by copying sets of the "parts" of plays, for the use of actors,—work done after the performance at night. "I wrote a beautiful hand in those days," he told me; "almost like engraved script,—though perhaps you won't believe it now."



A THEATRICAL VAGABOND.

Belasco was fortunate in his early days in an acquaintance with an actor and theatrical agent, James H. McCabe, who loaned him many old plays, which he studied, and also with R. M. Edwards, a representative in San Francisco of Samuel French, the New York publisher of French's Standard Drama, etc., who provided him with opportunity to augment his knowledge of theatrical publications and of plays in manuscript. McCabe sometimes procured professional employment for him, but his occupation was consistently desultory. He traversed the Pacific Coast, to and fro, during several years, with various bands of vagabond players, gleaning a precarious subsistence in a wild and often dangerous country, going south into Lower California and into Mexico, and going north to Seattle and to the home of his childhood, Victoria. Sometimes he ventured into the mountain settlements and mining camps of the inland country, travelling by stage when it was possible to do so, by wagon when he and his associates were lucky enough to have one, often on horseback or muleback, oftener on foot, performing in all sorts of places and glad and grateful for anything he could earn. His account of that period, as he has related



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it to me, is quite as replete with vicissitude, hardship, squalor, toil, romance, and misery as are the narratives over which the theatrical student muses, marvels, and saddens when reading the "Memoirs of Tate Wilkinson," Ryley's "Itinerant," Charlotte Charke's miserable narrative, or the story of Edmund Kean. "Many a time," Belasco has told me, "I've marched into town, banging a big drum or tooting a cornet. We used to play in any place we could hire or get into,—a hall, a big dining room, an empty barn; anywhere! I spent much of my second season on the stage (if it can be called 'on the stage') roaming the country, and in that way got my first experience as a stage manager,—which meant being responsible for everything; and in the years that followed I had many another such engagement. I've interviewed an angry sheriff 'many a time and oft' (the sheriffs generally owned the places we played in), or an angrier hotel-keeper, when we couldn't pay our board. I've been locked up because I couldn't pay a dollar or two for food and a bed; I've washed dishes and served as a waiter; I've done pretty much everything, working off such debts; and sometimes I've had the exciting pleasure of running away, sometimes alone, sometimes with others, before the hotel-keeper got 'on' that we hadn't money enough to





From an old photograph.

Belasco's Collection.

DAVID BELASCO

About 1873-'75







pay. I acted many parts in my first seasons 'on the road'—among them *Raphael*, in 'The Marble Heart'; *Mr. Toodle*, in the farce of 'The Toodles'; *Robert Macaire*; *Hamlet*; *Uncle Tom*; *Modus*, in 'The Hunchback'; *Marc Antony*, in 'Julius Cæsar'; *Dolly Spanker*, in 'London Assurance'; *Mercutio*, and scores of others I can't instantly call to mind."

After considerable of the nomadic experience thus indicated, Belasco, returning to San Francisco, obtained, through his friend McCabe, an engagement in the company of Annie Pixley (Mrs. Robert Fulford, 1858-1898), remembered for her performance of *M'liss*, in a rough melodrama, by Clay M. Greene, remotely based on Bret Harte's tenderly human and touching story bearing that name. For Annie Pixley he made a serviceable domestic drama on the basis of Tennyson's "Enoch Arden" (which poem had been published in 1864), and he acted in it, with her, as *Philip Ray*. That subject had been brought on the stage in a play by Mme. Julie de Marguerittes (1814-1866), in which Edwin Adams gained renown as the unhappy, heroic *Enoch*. For his play on the subject Belasco received from Fulford \$25. Later, he figured as an itinerant peddler, frequenting fairs at various towns in the neighborhood of San Francisco. In this character his attire comprised a black coat and



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trousers, a "stovepipe" hat, and a wig and whiskers. "I used to buy goods on credit," he told me, "and take them along; then I would get a soap-box or a barrel on the lot, or perhaps on a corner, and recite until I had a crowd, and then work attention 'round to my goods, which I generally managed to sell out."

### EMULATION OF WALTER MONTGOMERY.

Belasco, in his youth, entertained an admiration that was almost idolatrous for Walter Montgomery, an American actor who, coming from Australia, played in California when the boy was about seventeen years old. His spirit of emulation was fired by the extraordinary efforts which were put forth by that fine player to signalize the close of his engagement in San Francisco. On the night of June 17, 1870, supported by Barrett, McCullough, and the California Theatre stock company, Montgomery acted *Shylock*, *Romeo*, *King John*, *Hotspur*, *Hamlet*, *Benedick* and *King Louis the Eleventh*, in selected scenes from seven plays. On the next night he acted *Marc Antony*, in a revival of "Julius Cæsar,"—that being his last appearance in California as an actor. On June 20 and 21 the California Theatre was devoted to "Walter Montgomery in His Celebrated



## THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO 43

Royal Recitals." This was his programme on the first night:

Seven Ages....."As You Like It."  
Soliloquy on Death....."Hamlet."  
*Hubert and Arthur*....."King John."  
Churchyard Scene....."Hamlet."  
"The Bridge of Sighs".....Hood.  
"The Bells".....Poe.  
"The Vulgar Boy".....Ingoldsby.  
"The Bruce".....John Brougham.

(Written expressly for Mr. Montgomery.)

"Charge of the Light Brigade".....Tennyson.

On the second night he gave:

*Polonius* to his Son....."Hamlet."  
*Wolsey's* Farewell....."King Henry VIII."  
Dream of *Clarence*....."King Richard III."  
*Benedick's* Conversion....."Much Ado About Nothing."  
*Brutus' Oration*....."Julius Cæsar."  
*Antony's Oration*....."Julius Cæsar."  
"The Raven".....Poe.  
"Ben Battle".....Hood.  
"The Bloomsbury Christening".....Dickens.

As soon as possible after seeing Montgomery's remarkable display of talent and versatility Belasco began to give public recitals, arranged in general upon the model of Montgomery's, though varied to suit his own requirements. Chief among his selec-



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tions were "The Vagabonds," "The Maniac," "Curfew Must Not Ring To-night," "Bernardo del Carpio," *Hubert's* scene with *Prince Arthur*, from "King John"; *Marc Antony's* Oration, and *Hamlet's* Soliloquy on Death. He also gave imitations of various actors well known to the California public.

### A ROMANTIC COURTSHIP.—MARRIAGE.

In the latter part of 1870 or early in 1871, while giving recitations at Platt's Hall and elsewhere in San Francisco, his attention was attracted by an exceptionally handsome girl,—whom he has described as one "all compact of sweetness,"—who occupied a front seat on every occasion of his appearance. This young lady (she was little more than a child, being then only fifteen years old) was Miss Cecilia Loverich. After some time he was fortunate enough to obtain an introduction to her, at a private house where he had been engaged to give some recitations, and the acquaintance thus formed, and earnestly pursued by the romantic youth, soon ripened into a serious attachment. "I was nobody," said Belasco to me, "and she was a beauty, of wealthy family, and,—young as she was,—already much followed. I did not have much hope at first; but I didn't despair altogether, either. If I was only a strug-





**CECILIA LOVERICH, MRS. DAVID BELASCO**

From a photograph.  
Belasco's Collection.



CECILIA FROVICH, MRS. DAVID ELLISON

1910











gling beginner on the stage, a sort of strolling spouter, still *she* found my performances worth coming to see, over and over again!" The lover's suit was not impaired by the fact that presently he suffered a serious physical injury, the rupture of a vein in one of his feet, which took a course so unfavorable there was danger that amputation would be necessary: a dark-haired, pale, dreamy-eyed, romantic youth sometimes becomes more than usually interesting to a gentle, compassionate young woman when he is hurt and suffering. Although incapacitated for several weeks, during which time Miss Loverich paid him many delicate attentions, Belasco finally recovered, after a minor operation,—though, from his account of this episode, I surmise he came near dying under an anæsthetic. For a while he was compelled to use crutches, but ultimately he resumed his professional labor. The marriage of David Belasco and Cecilia Loverich was solemnized, August 26, 1873, at the home of his parents, No. 174 Clara Street, San Francisco,—Rabbi Neustader performing the ceremony. At that time the actor was employed at Shiels' Opera House: during about a year after their marriage his wife travelled with him on some of his various barnstorming expeditions—and that was the happiest experience of his life.

The engagement of the Chapman Sisters at the



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Metropolitan Theatre was ended on April 27, 1873, with a representation of "Cinderella" (produced there April 23),—in which Belasco probably participated,—that being the last regular theatrical performance given there. During several weeks immediately sequent to that event Belasco travelled with the Chapman Sisters, under the management of Woodard, playing in Sacramento (May 3) and in many other California and Pacific Coast cities and towns. By about the middle of June, however, he had returned to San Francisco; and, not being able to obtain immediate employment in the theatres, he worked for about two months as amanuensis for an old actor, James H. Le Roy, who had turned his attention to playwriting. On June 30 Belasco was present at the opening of Shiels' Opera House (afterward the Opera House, Gray's Opera House, etc.), when Bella Pateman (1844-1908) made her first appearance in San Francisco,—acting *Mariana*, in "The Wife," with Frank Roche as *Julian St. Pierre* and A. D. Billings as *Antonio*. "They did three or four more plays at Shiels',—'The Marble Heart,' 'The Lady of Lyons,' and other well-worn old pieces,"—so Belasco has said to me; "but the business was light and they needed a novelty. I had mentioned Wilkie Collins' 'The New Magdalen' [published that year] to Le Roy



as containing good material for a play and he had bought a copy of the book and begun to make a dramatization. He told Miss Pateman about it and when she agreed that it would make a fine play for her he hastened his work, dictating to me, and it was brought out soon afterward." Le Roy's "dramatization" of Collins' novel was produced at Shiels' Opera House on July 14, 1873, and it was the first, or one of the first, stage adaptations of the story to be acted in America: piratical versions of it eventually became so numerous that, at one time, they could be bought for \$10! Collins, in the disgraceful state of American copyright law at that time, was helpless to prevent what he designated, in writing to me, as the "larcenous appropriation of my poor 'Magdalen.'" As illustrating the practical value of priority in such matters and an injury often inflicted on authorship, it is significant to recall that Le Roy's scissored version of the novel and Miss Pateman's performance in it were much preferred, in San Francisco, to the drama made by Collins, as it was acted there, at the California Theatre, by Carlotta Leclercq (1838-1893), September 22, 1873. —This was the cast of the principal parts at Shiels':

<i>Rev. Julian Gray</i> .....	Frank Roche.
<i>Horace Holmcroft</i> .....	Charles Edmonds.
<i>Surgeon Ignatius Wetzel</i> .....	A. D. Billings.



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*Lady Janet Roy*.....Mrs. Charles Edmonds.  
*Grace Roseberry*.....Jean Clara Walters.  
*Mercy Merrick*.....Bella Pateman.

Writing about the production of Le Roy's "larcenous appropriation," Belasco has said: "When it was ready it represented a week of pasting, cutting, and putting together. . . . It proved to be one of the greatest successes San Francisco ever had. . . . As for the actress, Bella Pateman, she was a wonderful woman of tears, always emotionally true, and she became the idol of the hour, for her *Mercy Merrick* showed her to be an artist of great worth." Miss Pateman was an accomplished actress (her professional merit was much extolled in conversation with me by both Edwin Booth and Lawrence Barrett), and she became an exceptional public favorite in San Francisco. Her first engagement in that city continued until August 16, and, after July 14, it was devoted on all but four nights to repetitions of "The New Magdalen."

Belasco's association with Le Roy brought him into contact with persons influential in management of Shields' Opera House and he was fortunate enough to be engaged as a member of a stock company which was organized to succeed Miss Pateman there. The first star to appear with that company was Joseph Murphy, in a revival, made August 18, of





From an old photograph.  
The Albert Davis Collection.

**JOSEPH MURPHY**



From an old photograph.  
Courtesy of Mrs. Lou. Dorney.

**JOHN PIPER**







"Maum Cre," which held the stage for one week and in which Belasco acted the small part of *Bloater*. On August 25, the night before his wedding, he played with Murphy as *Bob Rackett*, in "Help," and on September 1 as *Baldwin*, in "Ireland and America." Murphy's engagement ended September 7. The next night Frederick Lyster made his first appearance at Shiels' (of which A. M. Gray had become "sole proprietor") in "The Rising Moon," and I believe that Belasco played in it, though I have not found a record of his doing so. On September 10 Laura Alberta was the star, in "Out at Sea," Belasco playing with her as *Harvey*. During the next six weeks he acted at Shiels'—personating *Sambo*, in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and *Major Hershner*, in "Twice Saved; or, Bertha the Midget," with Miss Alberta; *Spada*, in "The Woman in Red," with Fanny Cathcart, and *Darley*, in "Dark Deeds," with Miss Cathcart and George Darrell. Other plays presented at Shiels' during the period indicated include "More Blunders Than One," "Little Katy; or, The Hot Corn Girl," "The Stage Struck Chambermaid," "Man and Wife" (Darrell's version), "The Mexican Tigress," and "Evenings at Home." It is probable that Belasco appeared in all or most of those plays, but I have not been able to find programmes or other records showing that he did so.



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On October 18 he participated in a benefit for James Dunbar at Gray's Opera House (that name was first used on October 3), playing *Mons. Voyage*, in the Third Act of "Ireland As It Was."

### THEATRICAL LIFE IN VIRGINIA CITY.

After his employment at Gray's Opera House Belasco obtained an engagement with John Piper and joined the theatrical company maintained by that manager at Piper's Opera House, Virginia City, Nevada, at that time one of the most disorderly, dissolute, and disreputable towns in the United States. This "Opera House" was built by Maguire, in 1863, and did not become known as "Piper's" till several years later. It was utilized for all kinds of public meetings, social and political, as well as for theatrical performances, and, judging from the history of Nevada, was, in early days, most noted as the scene of prize pugilistic combats. Piper, who was not only a speculative manager, but also a hotel-keeper, seems likewise to have been a shrewd, hard, unscrupulous person, not, however, devoid of rough kindness. By way of keeping his theatrical company well in hand he pursued the ingenious method of permitting its members to run into debt to him, to the



amount of \$1,500, and then withholding their salaries, thus, practically, making them prisoners till they had worked off the debt. Charges for everything were extortionate in Virginia City in that period, and Piper readily succeeded in entangling his actors, and he made it exceedingly difficult for them to extricate themselves. "I tried to run away from him," said Belasco, telling me this story, "but got no further than Reno, where the sheriff, a 'pal' of his, took me in charge and 'returned' me for the debt!" In Virginia City he saw much more of that lawlessness, recklessness, and savagery which had already colored his thoughts and served to direct his mind into the lurid realm of sensation melodrama. There, also, he renewed acquaintance with various actors of prominence whom he had previously met in the course of his wanderings, and there he became associated with other performers, then or afterward distinguished. He acted many parts under Piper's management, among them *Buddicombe*, in "Our American Cousin," when Edward A. Sothern, as *Lord Dundreary*, was the star, and *Don Cæsar*, in John Westland Marston's "Donna Diana" (published 1868), a drama based on a Spanish original by Augustin Moreto (1618-1661), which was presented by the once famous Mrs. David P—— Bowers (1830-1895),



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an actress of great ability and charm, whom persons who saw her in her best days do not forget. Belasco remembers having acted with her, either at Virginia City or elsewhere in the West, as *Maffeo Orsini*, in "Lucretia Borgia"; *Charles Oakley*, in "The Jealous Wife"; *Richard Hare*, in "East Lynne," and a *Page*, in "Mary Stuart," and I have heard him speak of her with an ardor of admiration which I can well understand, and with deep gratitude for kindness shown him in the time of his necessitous youth.

### DION BOUCICAULT AND KATHARINE RODGERS.

Another eminent actor whom he met for the first time at Piper's Opera House,—according to his recollection, in the Winter of 1873,—was Dion Boucicault (1822?-1890), who appears to have noticed him as a youth of talent and promise and to have treated him with favor. Boucicault could ingratiate himself with almost any person, when he chose to do so, and,—whenever they may have met,—he readily won the admiration of young Belasco, who closely studied his acting and the mechanism of his plays, and whose work, as a dramatist and a manager, has been, in a great degree, moulded by his abiding influence. Bouci-





Photograph by Sarony.

Belasco's Collection.

MRS. D. P. BOWERS







cault, while in Virginia City, employed Belasco as an amanuensis, and (according to Belasco's recollection) incidentally dictated to him a part of the drama of "Led Astray," a fabric which he was then "conveying" from a French original, "La Tentation," by Octave Feuillet (1821-1890). That play was first presented in New York, at the Union Square Theatre, December 6, 1873, with Rose Eytinge and Charles Robert Thorne, Jr., in the leading parts. Another important player with whom Belasco became professionally associated in Virginia City was Katharine Rodgers, a remarkably clever actress and fascinating as a woman, who had gained reputation on the English Stage and who came to America with Boucicault and for some time acted under his direction, in "Mimi,"—a play that he made for her use, out of "La Vie de Bohème,"—and in other plays, winning much popularity. This performer had been the wife of James Rodgers (1826-1890), a genial, respected English actor, long associated with the theatres of Manchester and Birmingham.

#### CONFLICTIVE TESTIMONY.

I have made scrupulous inquiry relative to Belasco's first meeting with Boucicault (an event



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the exact date of which, since it profoundly influenced his career, ought to be established), and, although the former is positive that his memory of the occurrence is correct, I have become convinced that he has much confused the time and circumstances. The process of such misremembrances as this of Belasco's is neither unusual nor difficult to understand. From 1873 to 1883 his life was feverish with activity. During that period he certainly met Boucicault, in Virginia City, and was there associated with him, as amanuensis. When "La Tentation" and Boucicault's version of that play, called "Led Astray," were acted in San Francisco (April, 1874), Belasco saw them, and, like many other persons associated with the Theatre, he heard much of the disputation which eddied round them. Years later, remembering his association with Boucicault, in Virginia City, the mistaken impression found lodgment in his mind that it was "Led Astray" on which the elder playwright was at work when they became acquainted, and, by repetition and elaboration, that erroneous belief has become fixed. To my objection that it is *absolutely impossible* that Boucicault could have dictated to him "Led Astray" Belasco's reply, several times iterated, is, in effect, that Boucicault was working on the play "long before" it was produced in New York and that,



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whether possible or not, he is "very positive" Boucicault *did* dictate it to him, in Virginia City, during a blizzard. It would not be just to Belasco, he being sure that his recollection of this affair is absolutely accurate, to assert that it is wholly incorrect without giving his explicit statement of the incidents. Therefore, I quote it here, from his "Story":

"When Boucicault reached Virginia City, he was under contract to deliver a play to A. M. Palmer, of New York. 'Led Astray' was its title. But his writing hand was so knotted with gout that he could scarcely hold a pen. Boucicault was noted for being a very secretive man. He would never have a secretary because he feared such a man might learn too much of his methods of work. He was in the habit of saying: 'I can't write a line when I dictate. I think better when I have a pen in my hand.'

"But now he had to have assistance to finish 'Led Astray.' At this time I had some slight reputation as a stage manager and author. In those days everything was cut and dried, and the actor's positions were as determined as those of the pawns on a chess-board. But whenever an opportunity offered itself, I would introduce something less rigorous in the way of action, much to the disgust of the older players. Boucicault must have heard of my revolutionary methods, for he sent me a message to come and see him and have a chat with him. With much perturbation, I went to his hotel and knocked on his door.

" 'They tell me you write plays,' he began. Then followed question after question. He tested my handwriting, he



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commented on certain stage business he had heard me suggest the day before; then he said abruptly:

"‘I want you to take dictation for me,—I’m writing a play for the Union Square Theatre,—you have probably heard of the manager, A. M. Palmer,—at one time a librarian, but now giving Lester Wallack and Augustin Daly a race for their lives. I hope, young man, you can keep a secret; you strike me as being “still water.” Whatever you see, I want you to forget.’

"So I sat at a table, took my coat off and began Act One of ‘Led Astray.’ Boucicault lay propped up with pillows, before a blazing fire, a glass of hot whisky beside him. It was not long before I found out that he was the terror of the whole house. If there was the slightest noise below stairs or in the street, he would raise such a hubbub until it stopped that I had never heard the like of before.

"Whenever he came to a part of the dialogue requiring Irish, I noticed how easily his dictation flowed. When he reached a dramatic situation, he acted it out as well as his crippled condition would allow. One thing I noticed particularly: he always held a newspaper in his hand and gave furtive glances at something behind it I was not supposed to see. I was determined, however, to know just what he was concealing from me.

"The opportunity came one morning when he was called out of the room. Before he went, I noted how careful he was to place a newspaper so that it completely hid the thing under it. I went quickly to the table, and, turning over the pages, I found a French book, ‘La Tentation,’ from which the entire plot of ‘Led Astray’ was taken. In those days, authors did not credit the original source from which they adapted. But Boucicault was more than an adapter—he was a brilliant and indefatigable slave, resting neither night



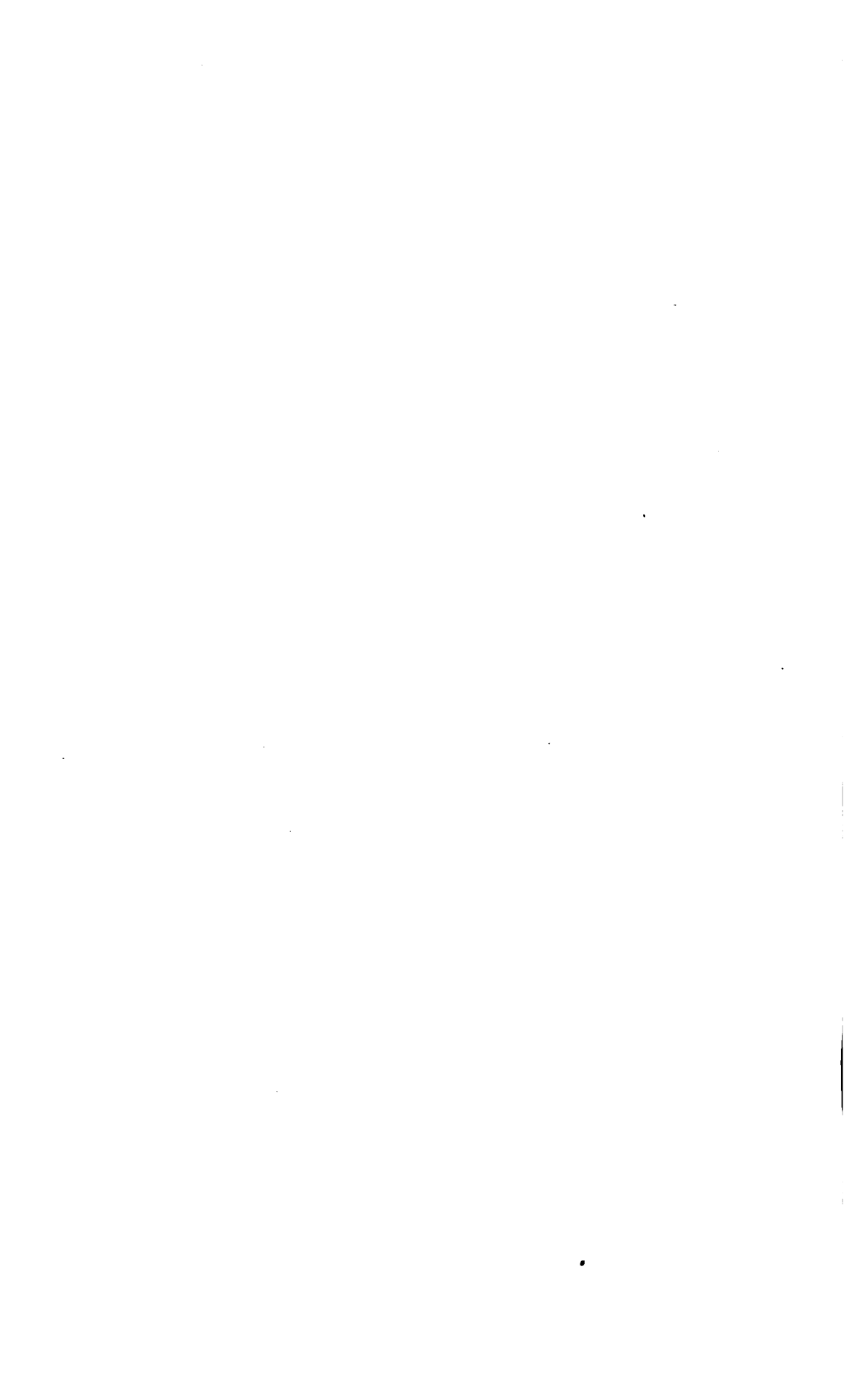


Photograph by Sarony.

Belasco's Collection.

DION BOUCICAULT  
"THE MASTER OF THE REVELS"







nor day. There is no doubt that even though he adapted,—in accordance with the custom of the time,—he added to the original source, making everything he touched distinctly his own. He left everything better than he found it; his pen was often inspired, and in spite of his many traducers, he was the greatest genius of our Theatre at that time. Boucicault was a master craftsman. . . .”

I am inclined to the opinion that the play of which Boucicault actually *did* dictate a part to Belasco, during the early days of their acquaintance, in Virginia City, is, perhaps, “Forbidden Fruit,”—which was derived from a French original, and which was first produced at Wallack’s Theatre, October 3, 1876: it is, however, to be remembered that there *is* an Irish character,—a kind of *Sir Lucius O’Trigger*-turned-blackguard, who is designated *Major O’Hara*,—in “Led Astray.” Nevertheless, as to Belasco’s reminiscence of the writing of that play, I am convinced that, though interesting, it is wholly apocryphal; the following is a summary of my reasons for so believing:

Belasco did not make his first appearance with Minnie Wells, at the Metropolitan Theatre, San Francisco, until December 16, 1872, and, of course, his meeting with Boucicault could not have preceded that date. Boucicault, moreover, and his wife, the beautiful Agnes Robertson, were absent



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from this country, according to my records, for about twelve years preceding 1872. In the Fall of that year they returned to America, and, on September 23, they reappeared together, at Booth's Theatre, New York, in "Arrah-na-Pogue." They acted there until November 16, and then made a tour through various cities of the country, but, as far as I have been able to ascertain, they did not go west of St. Louis, Missouri. Boucicault reappeared in New York, at Booth's Theatre, March 17, 1873, acting, for the first time anywhere, *Daddy O'Dowd*, of which part he gave truly a great impersonation and on which he had been at work during all his tour. His engagement at Booth's lasted until May 10. From that date to the latter part of August Boucicault was in New York,—except when he visited the ingratiating but false-hearted William Stuart (Edmund C. O'Flaherty, 1821-1886), at New London, Connecticut. During that period he was actively engaged on many projects,—the completion, rehearsal, and presentment of "Mora," which was brought out at Wallack's Theatre, June 8, and of "Mimi," produced there on July 1; the writing of other plays, and business negotiations relative to the building and opening of Stuart's Park Theatre, which, originally, was intended for his use. (Stuart, after many postpone-



ments, opened it, April 15, 1874, presenting Charles Fechter in "Love's Penance.") On August 28, 1873, Boucicault began an engagement at Wallack's Theatre, acting in "Kerry" and "Used Up." A few days later he broke down and went to New London to rest. On September 16, that year, in company with me, among others, he attended the first performance in America given by Tommaso Salvini: I talked with him there—at the Academy of Music. On December 6, 1873, his "Led Astray" was produced, for the first time anywhere, at the Union Square Theatre, New York. I was present, and I saw and heard Boucicault, when he was called before the curtain, and, writing in "The New York Tribune," in the course of a review of the performance, I recorded the following comment:

. . . The drama comes from the French of Octave Feuillet, *and it was translated by Mr. Boucicault*. Whoever wishes to see with what an assured step clever authorship can walk on ticklish ground may behold the imposing spectacle at the Union Square Theatre. Mr. Boucicault was called before the curtain on Saturday night by vociferous applause, both at the end of the Third Act and at the end of the play, and in the speech which finally he made he told his auditors to give at least two-thirds of the credit for whatever pleasure they had received to his friend Octave Feuillet. Mr. Boucicault was also understood to say something about a projected revival of Legitimate Drama. We were not aware



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of its demise. And, even if it were dead, we fail to perceive how Mr. Boucicault could manage to effect its resuscitation by the translating of French plays of very doubtful propriety. It is to be remembered, though, that Mr. Boucicault is an Irish gentleman and loves his joke. . . . In this we perceive Mr. Boucicault's preëminent skill. Nevertheless, the appearance of Octave Feuillet's name upon the playbill would be noted with satisfaction. Mr. Boucicault should be aware that, by lapses of this kind, he arms his detractors and is unjust to himself. . . .

Boucicault made his first appearance in San Francisco, at the California Theatre, on January 19, 1874 (the bill was "Boucicault in California,"—a weak sketch written for the occasion,—"Kerry," and "Jones's Baby"), and he arrived in that city, a few days earlier, not from Virginia City, but from Canada.

Belasco, meantime, was not established in Virginia City between December, 1872, and October, 1873: on the contrary, during most, if not all, of that time he was actively engaged in San Francisco (see my Chronology of his life). He disappears, however, from all the San Francisco records which I have been able to unearth after October 18, 1873, and I am satisfied that he then went to Virginia City, and there, several months later, met both Boucicault and Katharine Rodgers, when they were journeying eastward: Miss Rodgers first acted in





From an old photograph.

Belasco's Collection.

KATHARINE RODGERS







## THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO 61

San Francisco on February 3, 1874, at the California Theatre, in "Mimi." It seems obvious that Boucicault could not have dictated "Led Astray" to Belasco, in Virginia City, at a time when neither of them was there, and after that play had been acted in New York. If any other theatrical antiquary, more fortunate than I, chances to possess authentic records that show Boucicault and Belasco in conjunction, in Virginia City, prior to about November 1, 1873, I should be glad to learn of them.

### VARIEGATED EXPERIENCES.

It has not been possible to elicit an entirely satisfactory account of Belasco's career in the period extending from October 18, 1873, to about the end of February, 1876. In particular, it has been impossible, notwithstanding most earnest efforts, to establish the sequence of incidents of his experience in Virginia City. Nevertheless, much that occurred during the period indicated, nearly two and one-half years, has been ascertained beyond question, and such gaps as occur in the records have been supplied by reasonable surmise. He fulfilled, in all, five engagements in Virginia City, and three, if not four, of them were antecedent to "the fire" which, in 1875, devastated that mountain resort of licence



and crime. Among the actors with whom he was most closely associated in Piper's stock company were A. D. Billings, George Giddens, Sydney Cowell (Mrs. Giddens), George Hinckley (uncle of Blanche Bates), and Annie Adams (Mrs. Kiskaden, 1849-1916), mother of Miss Maude Adams. The period of his first employment there was a trying one and during it he broke down, became seriously ill, and was lodged for a time in the home of Piper, where his illness was augmented by a distressing experience with an unfortunate demented woman, the wife of Piper. Recalling that ordeal, he has said: "Her husband, naturally, felt loath to send his wife to the Insane Asylum in Stockton, so he had some rooms padded and arranged as comfortably as possible for her in his own house. I was ill there for three weeks, and my room, unhappily, was within calling distance of Mrs. Piper's. During the long nights I could hear her groaning and crying out,—not a very encouraging atmosphere for one who was himself suffering, and more from 'nerves' than anything else. Then one gray dawn I awoke to find Mrs. Piper standing at the foot of my bed. Apparently she was as sane as any one, and she expressed great solicitude as to my condition. It seemed to me an eternity as she stood there, though in reality it was only



about five minutes. Suddenly her mood changed. 'I'm going to kill some one,' she screamed, and made a lunge for me. But, luckily, her keeper, who had heard her, came in and restrained her, and we calmed her down and got her back to her own rooms."

Belasco's financial debt to Piper must have been paid or compounded on or about March 1, 1874, and his engagement in Virginia City terminated. On March 10, that year, he certainly was employed as a super, at the California Theatre, on the occasion of Adelaide Neilson's first appearance in San Francisco. The play was "Romeo and Juliet": Lewis Morrison acted *Romeo* and Barton Hill *Mercutio*. Miss Neilson's engagement (during which she played *Rosalind*, *Lady Teazle*, *Julia*, in "The Hunchback," and *Pauline*, in "The Lady of Lyons," as well as *Juliet*) ended on March 30: Belasco, whose admiration for that great actress was extreme, contrived to be employed at the California Theatre during the whole of it. On April 4, following, "the Entire Lingard Combination" appeared at the Opera House (so designated) in an English version of Feuillet's "La Tentation," and on April 6 John T. Raymond acted at the California Theatre as *Hector Placide*, in Boucicault's version of the same play, called "Led



Astray." Both those representations were seen by Belasco.

On April 23 Raymond, at the California, produced, for the first time, a stage synopsis made by Gilbert S. Densmore, of "The Gilded Age," by Samuel L. Clemens and Charles Dudley Warner. Writing of it, Belasco says: "While that play was building Densmore talked it all over with me. As it was originally written it was in five long acts and had in it a curious medley of melodrama. . . . When the script was eventually read to him [Raymond], all the comment he made, with a few of those choice expletives which he knew so well how to choose, was that he hated all courtroom scenes, except those in 'The Merchant of Venice' and in Boucicault's 'The Heart of Midlothian.' . . . It was in this frame of mind that he was finally persuaded to try 'The Gilded Age.' Of course, the play needed a lot of re-writing, and I don't believe any one really thought it would be successful. It was put on as a try-out because the man was in such sore need of a vehicle, and, like so many other plays which are produced as makeshifts, it soared its way into instant popularity. It was not by any means a wonderful play in itself, it was merely another instance of the personality of the player being fitted to the part, and



in the rôle [*sic*] of *Colonel Mulberry Sellers* John T. Raymond found himself and, incidentally, fame and fortune."

That is not altogether an accurate account of the dramatic genesis of "The Gilded Age." Densmore's adaptation of the book was piratical, and Clemens, hearing of it, protested vigorously, by telegraph, against continuance of its presentment. It was acted *only once* in San Francisco, in 1874. Densmore finally arranged to sell his stage version to Clemens, and that author himself made a dramatization of the novel. Writing about it, to William Dean Howells, he says:

"I worked a month on my play, and launched it in New York last Wednesday. I believe it will go. The newspapers have been complimentary. It is simply a *setting* for one character, *Colonel Sellers*. As a play I guess it will not bear critical assault in force." In another letter Clemens says: "I entirely rewrote the play *three separate and distinct times*. I had expected to use little of his [Densmore's] language and but little of his plot. I do not think there are now twenty sentences of Mr. Densmore's in the play, but I used so much of his plot that I wrote and told him I should pay him about as much more as I had already paid him in case the play proved a success. . . ."—Albert Bigelow Paine's "Mark Twain, a Biography." Volume I., pp. 517-18.



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On November 3, 1874, Raymond published the following letter:

(*From John T. Raymond to "The New York Sun."*)

"The Park Theatre, [New York].

"November 2, 1874.

"*To The Editor of 'The Sun':*

"*Sir:—*

"An article headed 'The Story of "The Gilded Age"' in 'The Sun' of this morning calls for a statement from me. The facts in the case are simply these: In April last I commenced an engagement in San Francisco. A few days after my arrival the manager of the theatre mentioned that Mr. Densmore, the dramatic critic of 'The Golden Era,' had dramatized Mark Twain's and Charles Warner's novel of 'The Gilded Age,' and would like to submit it to me. I read the play, and the character of *Colonel Sellers* impressed me so favorably that I consented to produce the piece the last week of my engagement. I did so, the play making a most pronounced hit. I then arranged with Mr. Densmore for the right to perform the play throughout the country. Upon my arrival in New York I heard that Mr. Clemens had telegraphed to San Francisco protesting against the play being performed, as he had reserved all rights in his copyright of 'The Gilded Age.' I at once recognized Mr. Clemens' claim, and wrote to Mr. Densmore to that effect. I then communicated with Clemens, with a view of having him write a play with *Colonel Sellers* as the chief character. While the negotiation was pending I received a letter from Mr. Densmore, requesting me to send the manuscript of his dramatization to Clemens, as he had purchased it, and that he (Clemens) had acted in a most liberal manner toward





From a photograph by Mora.

Belasco's Collection.

**JOHN T. RAYMOND**  
(1836-1887)







him. I sent the manuscript to Mr. Clemens, but not until after he had finished his play and read it to me, not one line of Mr. Densmore's dramatization being used in the present play, except that which was taken bodily from the novel of 'The Gilded Age.' These are the facts in the premises. Mr. Densmore's play was a most excellent one; the impression it made in San Francisco was of a most pronounced character, but in no way [?] does it resemble the present production, which is entirely the work of Mr. Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain).

"Yours, &c.,

"John T. Raymond."

Clemens' "guess" as to the worth of his work as a play was short of the truth: it was of no consequence, possessed practically no merit whatever, except as a vehicle for the actor. [The character of *Colonel Sellers* is presented by the dramatist in only a few of the aspects available for its exposition and is attached to the play by only a slender thread. Raymond, nevertheless, by means of thorough personification, made the character so conspicuous that it dominated the whole action of the play. The common notion that words are indispensable to the expression of character is unfounded. Character shows itself in personality, which is the emanation of it, and which finds expression in countless ways with which words are not associated. Personality was the potent charm of Raymond's embodiment of



*Colonel Sellers*,—a personality compounded of vigorous animal spirits, quaintness, rich humor, amiability, recklessness, a chronic propensity for sport, a sensitive temperament, and an ingenuous mind. The actor made the character lovable not less than amusing, by the spontaneous suggestion of innate goodness and by various scarcely definable sweetly winning traits and ways. His grave inquiry as to the raw turnips, "Do you *like* the fruit?" was irresistibly droll. His buoyant, confident ejaculation, —closing each discourse on some visionary scheme of profit,—"*There's millions* in it!" (which Raymond's utterance made a byword throughout America) completely expressed the spirit of the sanguine speculator and was not less potently humorous because of a certain vague ruefulness in the tone of it. In acting *Colonel Sellers* Raymond did something that was new, did it in an individual way, was original without being bizarre, and, possessing the humor which is akin to pathos, he could cause the laugh that is close to the tear.—W.W. in "The Wallet of Time."] "*The Gilded Age*" was first acted in New York, September 16, 1874, at the Park Theatre.

At about the time of the first San Francisco production of "*The Gilded Age*" Belasco appears to have been employed by William Horace Lingard,



and it is practically certain that he was a member of Lingard's company,—though I have not ascertained in what capacity,—on the occasion of “the grand opening of Maguire's New Theatre” (which was the old Alhambra Theatre, rebuilt and altered), on May 4, when “Creatures of Impulse,” “Mr. and Mrs. Peter White,” and a miscellaneous entertainment were presented there.

During the summer of 1874 Belasco worked as a secretary and copyist for Barton Hill, at the California Theatre, and also he performed, in a minor position, as an actor, at Maguire's New Theatre. He was thus associated with, among others, Sallie Hinckley, in a revival of “The New Magdalen”; Charles Fechter and Lizzie V. Price in a repertory which comprehended “Ruy Blas,” “Don Cæsar de Bazan,” “The Lady of Lyons,” “Hamlet,” and “Love's Penance”; Miss Jeffreys-Lewis and Charles Edwards in “School,” Boucicault's “The Willow Copse” and “The Unequal Match”; William J. Coggsell in “Nick o' the Woods”; Samuel W. Piercy in “Hamlet,” and Charles Wheatleigh in a dramatization of “Notre Dame” and in other plays. For Piercy Belasco has ever cherished extreme admiration and a pitiful memory of his untimely death, which,—caused by smallpox,—befell, in Boston, in 1882. During the summer of 1874



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Belasco also made various brief and unimportant "barnstorming" ventures in small towns and camps of California, Oregon, and Washington; likewise, he was associated, as stage director, with several groups of amateur actors in San Francisco. On August 31 a revival of Augustin Daly's play of "Divorce" was effected at Maguire's,—James A. Herne (his name billed without the "A.") and Miss Jeffreys-Lewis playing the principal parts in it. Whether or not Belasco was then in the company at Maguire's is uncertain, but I believe that he was. At any rate, when Mlle. Marie Zoe,—designated as "The Cuban Sylph,"—began an engagement there, September 14, in the course of which she appeared in "The French Spy," "The Pretty Housebreaker," "Nita; or, Woman's Constancy" (and "Mazeppa"?), Belasco was employed to co-operate with her in sword combats on the stage: he also served Mlle. Zoe, during her stay in San Francisco, as a sort of secretary.

From October 1 to the latter part of December, 1874, Belasco continued in employment at Maguire's New Theatre, officiating not only as an actor of small parts but as stage manager, as a hack playwright, and as secretary for Maguire. On October 12 he played the *Dwarf* (one of the *Phantom Crew* of *Hendrick Hudson*), in "Rip Van Winkle,"



Herne personating *Rip* and Alice Vane appearing as *Gertrude*. On October 21 he participated in a representation of "The People's Lawyer" (playing *Lawyer Tripper?*), in which Herne acted as *Solon Shingle*. On the next night "Alphonse" was acted at Maguire's, but Belasco seems not to have been in the bill, because he is positive that he attended the first production in San Francisco, made that night at the California Theatre, of Frank Mayo's dramatization of Charles Reade's powerful and painful novel of "Griffith Gaunt." "I made a version of that book," Belasco has told me, "and it was a good one, as I remember it; but it passed out of my control soon after it was written: I sold it—to James McCabe, I think,—for a few dollars. I know it was much played in the interior [meaning the small towns of California, Nevada, etc.]. About the same time that I made my version of 'Griffith Gaunt,'—which, of course, was prompted by seeing Mayo's,—we brought out a new play at Maguire's, called 'Lady Madge,' by J. H. Le Roy. I don't recall what it was about. I remember that it was written expressly for Adele Leighton, a rich novice, and that I did some work on it for Le Roy and made him a clean script and set of the parts. Herne, Sydney Cowell, and Thomas Whiffen were in the cast." "Lady Madge" was acted at Maguire's



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November 8, and did not hold the stage for more than a week. On the 11th of that month a dramatization of Lever's "Charles O'Malley," made by Herne, was brought out, Herne appearing in it as *Mickey Free* and Sydney Cowell as *Mary Brady*. On November 16 Annette Ince and Ella Kemble acted at Maguire's, supported by Herne and Whiffen, in "The Sphinx," and on the 26th a notably successful revival was made of "Oliver Twist,"—a more or less rehashed version of the dramatic epitome of the novel which had been made known throughout our country by E. L. Davenport and James W. Wallack, the Younger, being used. Herne played *Sikes*; Annette Ince, *Nancy*; Ella Kemble, *Rosa Maylie*, and —— Lindsay, *Fagin*. On December 1 "Carlotta! Queen of the Arena" was brought out, with Miss Ince as *Carlotta* and Herne as *Bambuno*. I have been able to find only one other definite record of a performance at Maguire's, prior to March 1, 1875; that record is of a presentment there of the old musical play of "The Enchantress," on December 24, with Amy Bennett in the principal female part: Belasco directed the production (ostensibly under the stage management of Herne) and appeared in the prologue as *Pietro* and in the drama as *Galeas*. "I did a lot of hard work on 'The Enchantress' for Miss Bennett's



appearance in it,—in fact, I rewrote most of the dialogue,” Belasco has declared to me.

## RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS.—1875.

In Pinero's capital farce of “The Magistrate” *Mrs. Posket*, solicitous to conceal her age, addresses to her friend *Colonel Lukyn* an earnest adjuration relative to an impending interview with her husband: “Don't give him *dates*; keep anything like *dates* away from him!” Belasco's aversion to fixed facts fully equals that of the distressed lady, though, in his case, it is temperamental instead of secretive. “The vagabond,” he writes, “always says ‘at this time,’ whether it be to-day or to-morrow, and, like Omar, he ‘lets the credit go.’ The incidents that now come to mind are a little confused as to their chronological order, but what does it matter, if the *impression* is true!” It “matters,” unfortunately, much,—because confusion and apparent contradiction which result from lack of accuracy and order sometimes tend to create an unjust belief that related incidents, actually authentic, are untrue. It has, moreover, rendered protracted and tedious almost beyond patience the work of compiling and arranging a clear, sequent, authoritative account of Belasco's long and extraordinary career. I have



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ascertained divers particulars of his early experiences and alliances (verifying them as *facts* by diligent search and inquiry in many directions), which, however, I have not invariably been able to place in exact chronological order and which may conveniently be summarized here.

Perhaps the most important single event of the first decade of Belasco's theatrical life was his employment in a responsible position at Baldwin's Academy of Music. But during about a year and a half prior to his first engagement there, and also during about the same length of time subsequent to it, he gained much valuable knowledge, in association with various players, acting in "the lumber districts" of Oregon and Washington; in Victoria and Nevada, and in many California towns, including Oakland, Sacramento, Petaluma, Stockton, Marysville, San José, etc. Wandering stars, of varying magnitude, with whom he thus appeared include Sallie Hinckley and Mrs. Frank Mark Bates (respectively, aunt and mother of Blanche Bates), Amy Stone, Ellie Wilton, Charles R. Thorne, Sr., Mary Watson, Annie Pixley, Fanny Morgan Phelps, Frank I. Fayne, Gertrude Granville, Laura Alberta, Katie Pell, and the old California minstrel, "Jake" Wallace. With Miss Pell and Wallace he appeared in the smaller towns of Cali-





From a rare old photograph.  
The Albert Davis Collection.

GERTRUDE GRANVILLE



From a photograph by Sarnoy.  
Belasco's Collection.

ANNIE PIXLEY AS *M'LISS*







fornia and Nevada, and he has afforded me the following interesting bit of random recollection. "Wallace was held dear in every Western mining camp. He was a banjoist, and when the miners heard him coming down the road, singing the old '49 songs, there used to be a general cry of 'Here comes Wallace!' and work would stop for the day. In 'The Girl of the Golden West' [1905] I introduced a character in memory of the 'Jake' Wallace of long ago; I gave him the same name, made him sing the same songs, and enter the poker-saloon to be greeted in the same old hearty manner. When negotiations were under way between the great composer Puccini and myself for 'The Girl of the Golden West' to be set to music, I took him to see a performance of the play. As we sat there, I could feel no perceptible enthusiasm from him until *Jake Wallace* came in, singing his '49 songs. 'Ah!' exclaimed Puccini, '*there* is my theme at last!'"

Of Mrs. Bates and her ill-fated husband he gives this reminiscence: "Both Mrs. Bates and her husband were sterling actors [they were players of respectable talent, well trained in the Old School—W.W.]. Mrs. Bates was a slight little woman, full of romance and for the greater part of our acquaintance much given to melancholy. I look back on her prime, and I know of no actress who



gave a more satisfactory interpretation of *Camille* than she did. Her *Marie Antoinette* was also very impressive. Mr. and Mrs. Bates soon left for Australia, but before they went, as a token of friendship, I was given many manuscript plays and costumes which the two would not need. Soon after Mr. Bates was mysteriously murdered. Many months passed, and I heard that Mrs. Bates was again in San Francisco, staying at the Occidental Hotel. So I called upon her. 'I only have Blanche to live for now,' she said, and while we sat there she called for her little daughter to come to her. That was my first meeting with my future star. Thereafter little Blanche was put to school, and I went on the road with Mrs. Bates, playing *Armand Duval* to her *Camille*. Then I lost sight of her for some time until at last one day I was walking with 'Jimmie' Barrows, when he began to tell me of a famous actress who was boarding at his house. 'Her name is Mrs. Bates,' declared 'Jimmie,' and when I went home with him I found my old friend again. Blanche had pulled out, like a fast growing flower, blithesome and gay; but her mother seemed to have parted with the last drop in the cup of her happiness, and during our entire tour showed the nervous strain she had experienced during the awful times in Australia. 'It is so difficult for me to go back



to the different theatres and tread the stages we played on so often together,' she would say. 'I seem to see Frank's face everywhere, in the shadows of the wings and out in the cold empty spaces of the auditorium when we are rehearsing. I wonder who struck him down.'

"I felt a great sympathy for her, and she and I became almost like brother and sister. Never shall I forget those days and the long walks we used to take under skies that held all the warmth and splendor of southern Europe, along roads that wound their tree-embowered way through the hills to the little monastery nestling above. At night we could hear the ringing of far-away bells, and sometimes through the stilly air the sound of voices was wafted to us across the silence. In this atmosphere Mrs. Bates would sit and talk to me of the East, and I would dream dreams of things to be. There was a popular song of the time in San Francisco called 'Castles in the Air,' and invariably our talks would end with a laugh and by my humming that tune.

"It was Mrs. Bates' ambition to see Blanche doing literary work; for she did not want her to enter the theatrical profession, but later she said: 'I fear the child will go on the stage after all, and what is more, I feel that she is going to have a future.



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Perhaps, who knows, some day you may be able to do something for her,' and I promised her that I would, if luck ever came my way."

Writing to me about other actors of that far-off time, Belasco has mentioned: "I remember, with special pleasure and admiration, John E. Owens, though I don't remember that I ever acted with him. He produced a play at the Bush Street Theatre [error: more probably at the California?], the name of which I have forgotten, but it was all about 'a barrel o' apple sass' [strange that Belasco should have forgotten the title,—“The People's Lawyer,” sometimes billed as “Solon Shingle,”—because he several times acted in it, with Herne and others], and I was so impressed that I wrote a play for him, called ‘The Yankee.’ Owens very kindly listened to my reading of it, but told me he had no intention of putting aside a long tried success. However, he liked some of the speeches in my piece and paid me \$25 for them."

"One of my most valued teachers," he also writes, "was ‘old man Thorne’ [Charles R. Thorne, Sr.]. I did much work for him as copyist, prompter, etc., and attended to all sorts of details,—hiring of wigs, arms, costumes, etc., for the minor parts and for supers in productions which he put on,—so that often he used to say to me, ‘My dear Davie, I don’t



know what I should do without you!' Once, when Thorne produced 'King Richard III.,' in a tent, in Howard Street, I took part and fought a sword combat with him on horseback. He was always very kind to me, taught me much and gave me pieces of wardrobe, feathers, belts, swords, &c. Another early favorite of mine was Mary Gladstone. I copied parts and scripts for her, at the Metropolitan and elsewhere, and whenever she played *Mary Warner* in San Francisco I cried over her performance so much that she was delighted and gave me a copy of the prompt book. There were no streetcars in those days, and often I walked with her to and from the theatre."

Belasco was absent from San Francisco from about the middle of January, 1875, until the following May. A Miss Rogers, who had been a school teacher, who is described as having been "very beautiful," and who became infected with ambition to shine as a dramatic luminary, obtained sufficient financial support to undertake a starring tour and Belasco was employed by her as an agent, stage manager, and actor. The tour appears to have begun, auspiciously, in (Portland?), Oregon, and to have been continued, with declining prosperity, in small towns along the Big Bear and Little Bear rivers. The repertory presented comprised "East



Lynne," "Camille," "Frou-Frou," etc., and "Robert Macaire." "I always liked to play *Macaire*," Belasco has told me, "and whenever I got a chance to make up a repertory I included that piece in it." The tour lasted as long as the financial support was continued: then the company was ignominiously disbanded. Belasco and Miss Rogers, however, continued to act together for several weeks, presenting a number of one-act plays—such as "A Conjugal Lesson," "A Happy Pair," "Mr. and Mrs. Peter White," etc.,—which require only two performers. Belasco also gave recitations. "One of my 'specialties,' " he has told me, "was 'The Antics of a Clown,' in which I gave imitations of opera singers and ballet dancers—using a slack rope instead of a taut wire. I also gave imitations of all the well-known actors, and I had a 'ventriloquist act,' with dummies. I made my own wigs and costumes and, altogether, I worked pretty hard for a living!"

On February 15, 1875, Augustin Daly produced his authorized adaptation of Gustav von Moser's "Ultimo," at the second Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York, under the name—once known throughout our country—of "The Big Bonanza." Its success was instant and extraordinary. R. H. Hooley, of Chicago, presently employed Bartley Campbell (1844-1888) to make another version of that play,





**DAVID BELASCO AS ROBERT MACAIRE**

*Strop.* Suppose he should wake?  
*Macaire.* He won't wake!

Photograph by Bradley & Rulofson, San Francisco.  
Original loaned by Mrs. David Belasco.



DAVID BELASCO AS ROBERT MACAIRE

Macaire. He won't wake!  
Stop. Suppose he should wake?







\_\_\_\_\_



“specially localized and adapted for San Francisco.” Campbell fulfilled his commission, passing several weeks in the Western metropolis in order to provide “local atmosphere.” Belasco was still “barnstorming” when he learned of the appearance of Hooley’s Comedy Company in San Francisco,—May 10, at the Opera House, in Campbell’s “Peril; or, Love at Long Branch,”—and he immediately ended his uncertain connection with Miss Rogers in order to return home, so that he might witness the performances of Hooley’s company and, if possible, become a member of it. “I was much impressed by the reputation of ‘Hooley’s Combination,’ ” he writes in a note to me; “and I wanted particularly to see William H. Crane and M. A. Kennedy. Crane’s big, wholesome method made a great success, and the whole company was popular.” Belasco seems not to have reached home until about the end of the second week of the Hooley engagement: soon after that he contrived to obtain employment at the Opera House as assistant prompter and to play what used to be styled “small utility business.” His note to me continues: “Because I had played many big parts, out of town, some of my theatrical friends thought my willingness to do *any work* that would give me valuable experience was beneath my ‘dignity’ and that I was thereby losing ‘caste.’ I never



saw it that way. 'Haven't you any pride?' they used to say; and I used to answer 'No, I expect to be obliged to spend a certain amount of time in the cellar before I'm allowed to walk into the parlor!'" And in conversation with me on this subject he has said, "Why, I would do *anything* in those days, to learn or get a chance: I once worked as a dresser for J. K. Emmet, because I couldn't get into his company any other way,—but it wasn't long before I was playing parts with him."

In his "Story" Belasco mentions that Daly came to San Francisco at about the same time as Hooley and that when the latter brought out "Ultimo," and Daly produced "The Big Bonanza," "strange as it is to relate, the productions were almost equally successful." That is an error: Hooley's production was made on June 7 and, though distinctly inferior to Daly's,—made on July 19,—priority had its usual effect and the wind was completely taken out of Daly's sails: "The Big Bonanza" was acted in San Francisco by Daly's company less than half-a-dozen times, while "Ultimo" was played for several weeks and also was several times revived.

Belsaco's relation with the Hooley company lasted until July (11?), on which date its season was ended at the Opera House,—a tour of Pacific Slope towns beginning the next week. Belasco,



remaining in San Francisco, endeavored to attach himself to Daly's company, but failed to do so,—partly, it is probable, because of his intimate connection with Maguire, who was both friendly to Hooley and inimical to Daly, whom he had striven to exclude from San Francisco by refusing to rent him a theatre. Daly, however, hired Platt's Hall and, July 18, presented his company there, in "London Assurance," so successfully that Maguire decided to withdraw his opposition and share the profits of success. Daly's company, accordingly, was transferred to the Opera House on July 15, making its first appearance there in "Divorce," with Belasco as one of the auditors.

During the remainder of 1875 Belasco labored in much the same desultory and precarious way. When no other employment could be procured by him he worked as a salesman in an outfitting shop. "One thing I did," he gleefully relates, "for which I was much looked down upon—whenever I went into the country towns I peddled a 'patent medicine,' as I called it; a gargle made from a receipt of my mother's, and it was a good one, too; I know because I not only sold it but I *used* it! And I coaxed all my theatrical friends to use it and write testimonials for me." His chief business, however, when not regularly engaged in the theatres, was the collection



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and compilation of a library of plays. Between 1875 and 1880 he prepared prompt books of almost every play that was successfully produced in San Francisco—altering and rearranging many of them,—and in frequent instances supplying them to travelling companies or stars. His friend Mrs. Bates, speaking to me (1908) about him and about the facility he developed as an adapter and playwright, said: “He was a marvel! In ‘the old days’ I have known a star to give Belasco an *outline* of a plot, with three or four situations, on a Thursday night—and we *acted the play* on the next Monday!”

Among dramatizations that he made in this year, or the next, are “Bleak House,”—prompted by the success of Mme. Janauschek, who had presented a version at the California Theatre, June 7,—“David Copperfield,” “Dombey & Son,” “Struck Blind,” and “The New Magdalen.” The latter was a variant of Le Roy’s version, which he made for his friend Ellie Wilton, and which was first acted at the California on August 7, 1875. On the 27th of that month “Lost in London” was acted at Maguire’s New Theatre, according to a prompt book made by Belasco, and on the 30th Reade’s “Dora” was brought out there,—“under my stage direction,” says Belasco, and adds: “I also did some work on the [prompt] book, so as to make the part



of *Farmer Allen* more suitable for James O'Neill." On November 1 J. A. Sawtell made his first appearance in San Francisco, in one of Murphy's many revivals of "Maum Cre." "I recall *that* night, perfectly," writes Belasco, "because I then first met Sawtell, with whom I afterward travelled in many capacities. When I produced 'The Girl of the Golden West' (1905), Sawtell asked me for an engagement—just so he 'could be doing something,' as he put it—and I remember that he came up to me on the stage one night and said: '“Davy,” I was a big star in California and you were my boy assistant; now here you are with your own theatre and I'm playing a small part in it! How did you do it?”’"

About the end of November Belasco left Maguire's employment and took a place as assistant stage manager, prompter, and general helper under Charles R. Thorne, Sr., who, on December 18, opened Thorne's Palace Theatre (it had previously been Wilson's Amphitheatre), at the corner of Montgomery and Market Streets, San Francisco. That engagement lasted for about three weeks—Thorne closing his theatre on December 31, without warning. Belasco's delight in acquiring experience was gratified in this venture, but it was not otherwise profitable to him, as Thorne was unable to pay



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more than a small part of his salary. Besides discharging his other duties Belasco acted, in this engagement, *Santo*, in "Gaspardo; or, The Three Banished Men of Milan"; *Signor Meteo*, in "The Miser's Daughter," and *Gilbert Gates*, in "The Dawn of Freedom." "The Fool's Revenge,"—Thorne as *Bertuccio* and Kate Denin as *Fiordelisa*,—"The Forty Thieves," "Who Killed Cock Robin?" and "Faustus, a Romantic Spectacle," were also produced, and, in one capacity or another, Belasco took part in all those productions; but I have not been able to find programmes. On January 7, 1876, the house was reopened, as the Palace Theatre, under the management of Col. J. H. Wood, presenting Frank Jones, in "The Black Hand; or, The Lost Will," in which Belasco performed as *Bob, a Policeman*. Jones' engagement lasted for about three weeks: thereafter Belasco drifted back into the employment of Maguire.

### BALDWIN'S ACADEMY AND BARRY SULLIVAN.

In 1876 Edward J. Baldwin, locally known as "Lucky Baldwin," in a business association with Thomas Maguire built a theatre in San Francisco which was named Baldwin's Academy of Music. Baldwin had been an hostler, Maguire a cab-driver;



both had prospered and become wealthy—Baldwin to an astonishing degree. The theatre, which was incorporated with an hotel, called the Baldwin, was built on land owned by Maguire, at the corner of Market and Powell streets, and it was an uncommonly spacious and commodious edifice. Baldwin and Maguire, although associated in this enterprise, were not friends, and Belasco has assured me that most of their business transactions were carried on through him, as an intermediary. Baldwin's Academy of Music was opened March 6, 1876. Maguire was announced as "proprietor," James A. Herne as stage manager: Belasco, although not advertised as such, officiated as assistant stage manager and prompter. The opening bill was "King Richard III.,"—Cibber's perversion of Shakespeare's tragedy,—with the Irish tragedian Barry Sullivan in the central character, supported by the stock company from Maguire's New Theatre. That company included, among others, James A. Herne, Arthur D—— Billings, Louis James, Edward J—— Buckley, William Henry Crane, Michael A. Kennedy, Katie Mayhew, Emily Baker, Louise Hawthorne, and Mrs. Belle Douglass. James F—— Cathcart was specially engaged, to play *Richmond*, which part he acted till March 10, when he was super-



seded by James O'Neill; he played various other parts, however, during the engagement. Belasco played *Sir Richard Ratcliff*. The engagement of Barry Sullivan lasted till April 16, the plays presented, after "King Richard III.," being "The Wonder," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "The Gamester," "King Lear," "Othello," "The Merchant of Venice," a version of "Don Cæsar de Bazan" called "A Match for a King," "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," and "The Wife." In all of those plays Belasco participated, acting small parts, which are named in the schedule of his repertory given later in this work. On April 18 Mrs. James A——— Oates and her "Grand Opera Company" succeeded Sullivan, at Baldwin's Academy, in "Mme. l'Archiduc," while Maguire's stock company returned to Maguire's New Theatre, where some of its members, including Belasco, appeared, in support of Messrs. Baker and Farron, in a trivial play called "Heinrich and Hettie." Belasco, who had profited by his association with Barry Sullivan,—an actor of exceptional ability and wide experience, and, though rough in method and sometimes violently vehement in delivery, a master of his vocation,—and had been so fortunate as to please that austere martinet, provides, in his "Story," this interesting glimpse of him:



"To my mind the most difficult rôles (*sic!*) were the officers and flying messengers in the Shakespearean plays, when cast with some famous tragedian. All young actors appreciated this, and, knowing Sullivan's temperament, were very loath to subject themselves to his rough handling. It so happened that I was selected to play these flying messengers and recite the tricky speeches, but no more than the others did I escape. One day I suddenly found myself held high in air, and my descent was equally rapid. I was laid up for several nights. As a reward he cast me to play *Francis*, in 'The Stranger,' but because of the objections of James and Buckley, each of whom claimed the part, it was never played. I had the advantage of private rehearsals, however, with this great tragedian in his room at the Baldwin Hotel. . . . The reason why he liked me, he said, was that, with my pale face and blue-black hair, I reminded him of a little priest who had been a chum of his in Ireland. When he left, he gave me a much-prized feather, such as actors usually wore when they played *Malcolm* or *Macbeth*. 'I shall probably never see you again,' he said, 'and it may help you to remember me with kindly feelings. It belonged to the girl I loved best in the world.'"

After his engagement with Baker and Farron Belasco went "barnstorming" in various California and Nevada towns and camps, but returned to San Francisco at intervals, sometimes remaining there a few days, while seeking employment,—working, meanwhile, on dramatic versions of various books or stories or on the revision and alteration of old



plays,—sometimes acting small parts at any of the theatres or serving as a super when no better occupation was obtainable. On May 4, in that city, he participated in a performance at Maguire's New Theatre for the benefit of M. A. Kennedy, when the bill included "One Thousand Milliners," "Robert Macaire," and the burlesque of "Kenilworth,"—in which latter play he had often acted *Queen Elizabeth*, as I have reason to think he did on this occasion. He seems, also, to have taken part, in a minor capacity, in at least one of the performances given in May, 1876, at the California Theatre, by Edwin Adams, who played *Rover*, in "Wild Oats," and he saw that fine actor as *Enoch Arden*, if he did not act with him in the play about that character. He also saw, May 29, 1876, at Wade's Opera House, San Francisco, George Rignold's first performance in San Francisco of *King Henry the Fifth*,—a remarkably pictorial, spirited, fervent, and stirring impersonation.

Rignold had been brought to America by Jarrett & Palmer, under an arrangement with Charles Calvert, of Manchester, England, and he made his first appearance in this country, February 6, 1875, at Booth's Theatre,—then under the direction of those managers,—acting *King Henry the Fifth*. Shakespeare's play, which was withdrawn at Booth's



April 24, 1875, was revived there, April 10, 1876, and ran for five weeks. Some dissension arose between Rignold and Jarrett & Palmer, and those managers arranged for the presentment of the Shakespearean historical drama and pageant (Calvert's setting) in San Francisco, at the California Theatre, where, on June 5, it was brought out, with Lawrence Barrett as *King Henry*. Jarrett & Palmer conveyed their production and members of the theatrical company across the continent on board a special train, which left Jersey City at 1.30 A. M., June 1, and arrived at the mole, Oakland, California, at 9.22 A. M., June 4,—having made the journey in eighty-three hours, thirty-nine minutes, sixteen seconds. Rignold, when acting in the Western metropolis, preparatory to returning to England by way of Australia, was under the management of Frederick W. Bert. Belasco closely studied both those Shakespeare productions and the acting with which they were illustrated, thereby adding materially to his knowledge of the good traditions of Shakespearean interpretation. No more scrupulous and competent stage director than Lawrence Barrett ever lived, while Rignold had been carefully trained by Calvert, one of the best of stage managers and Shakespearean actors,—and had enjoyed the advantage of seeing Calvert play the



part when first he revived the history, at Manchester. Belasco himself never set a finer spectacle on the stage than Calvert's presentment of "King Henry V."

During June, like Asmodeus, he flamed in many places, generally appearing for only a single performance. By July 15, 1876, he was at home again, and as prompter and stage manager, and sometimes as super or actor of small parts, was employed at Baldwin's Academy of Music during an engagement there of George Fawcett Rowe, who, on that date, began, as *Waifton Stray*, in his play of "Brass," and acted, in succession, *Micawber*, in "Little Em'ly," and *Hawkeye*, in "Leatherstocking," also one of his dramas. On July 28, Sunday night, Belasco appeared, as *DeWilt*, in a performance, for the benefit of E. J. Buckley, given "by John McCullough and members of the Dramatic Profession," at the California Theatre. The play was Augustin Daly's "Under the Gas-Light." McCullough and Barton Hill recited, and McCullough performed as *Julian St. Pierre*, in the Dagger Scene, from "The Wife." On August 14 Eleanor Carey made her first appearance in San Francisco, acting *Miss Gwilt*, in a dramatization of Wilkie Collins' "Armadale," and Belasco, then meeting her, formed an acquaintance which, eventually,



was valuable to him: he made a play for Miss Carey, on the basis of "Article 47," calling it "The Creole," which was acted at the Union Square Theatre, New York, January 17, 1881, and in which she was seen in many cities.

WITH BOOTH AT THE CALIFORNIA.

The period of about two and a half years, from August, 1876, to February, 1879, was one of incessant activity for Belasco: in it he underwent much toil and acquired much knowledge which served to develop his faculties and tended to equip him for the many-sided labor of his later life. At first, his progress in that period was slow; but it is not daily exercise, it is the total effect of long persistence in it, that develops, and scrutiny of the register of Belasco's experience in those years exhibits various events of signal significance and many incidents of interest which require mention and comment. One of the latter, which he recalls with special pleasure, was his meeting with Edwin Booth. That great actor, whose professional novitiate was served in San Francisco,—chiefly at the old Metropolitan Theatre,—from 1852 to 1856, left there in September, 1856, and did not again visit the West for exactly twenty years. On September 4, 1876, at



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the California Theatre, acting *Hamlet*, he began an engagement which lasted for eight weeks, in the course of which he was seen, in succession, as *Richelieu*, *Iago*, *Othello*, *King Richard the Second*, *King Lear*, *Bertuccio*, in "The Fool's Revenge"; *Shylock*, *Pescara*, in "The Apostate"; *Marc Antony*, *Cassius*, and *Brutus*, in "Julius Cæsar"; *King Richard the Third*, *Mr. Haller*, in "The Stranger"; *Lucius Brutus*, in "The Fall of Tarquin," and *Claude Melnotte*. Belasco was intensely eager to see and study the acting of Booth—surely the greatest tragic genius that has graced our Stage and a consummate executant in art—and he sought to obtain an engagement at the California Theatre to play the same "line of parts" (as the phrase goes among old stock company actors) which he had performed in the preceding Spring with Barry Sullivan. Though he failed in that effort—and was keenly disappointed thereby—he was not to be balked in his purpose, and got himself employed, during the Booth engagement, as a super. "I could not give *every* night to such work," he has told me; "but I 'walked on' with him, at least once, in every play he did,—and in 'Hamlet,' 'Richelieu,' and 'Julius Cæsar' I think I went on at every performance. In 'Cæsar' when Booth played *Cassius* McCullough was the *Brutus* and Thomas W. Keene the





**EDWIN BOOTH AS HAMLET**

*"There's something in his soul  
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood."*

**—Act III, sc. 1**

Photograph by Sarony.  
Author's Collection.



EDWIN BOOTH AS HAMLET

There's something in his soul  
Of which his melancholy sits on brood,  
-Act III, sc. 1







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*Antony*; when Booth played *Brutus* McCullough was *Cassius*; when Booth was *Antony* Keene was *Cassius* and McCullough went back to *Brutus*. We used to wish we had Lawrence Barrett there for *Cassius*—but 'Tom' Keene was a fine actor in his way, and I shall never forget those performances of 'Cæsar,' nor those of 'Othello,' in which Booth and McCullough alternated as *Othello* and *Iago*. Booth was my *great* idol; the one actor who, for me, could surpass McCullough, Barrett, and Montgomery. I found him very uneven—that is, his performances were not always up to his own standard. But, when he was really 'in the vein,' there was *nobody* like him; there never has been, and there never will be! I never heard such a voice,—so full of fire, feeling, and power,—and I never saw such eyes as Booth's, when he played *King Richard the Third*, *Richelieu*, or *Iago*. At first I used to go to the California to watch his rehearsals, but I soon found out it was little use. The plays were all an old story to him and he wouldn't rehearse. McCullough had Booth's prompt books, and Booth left the company pretty much to him and just 'ran through' the big scenes with the principals. He was very gentle, considerate, and kind to everybody, but he seldom said much unless spoken to. I valued my acquaintance with him greatly; I never missed an



opportunity to see him, and I cherish his memory as that of one of the best of men and greatest of actors."

Belasco's enthusiasm for Booth has led him, in recent years, to make an extensive collection of precious stage relics associated with that sombre genius: visitors to the reception room on the stage of the Belasco Theatre will find the "star's" dressing room, which opens off it, indicated by a star of brilliants which was worn, first, by William Charles Macready as *Hamlet*, and, afterward, by Booth, in the same part. There, also, are displayed Booth's *Brutus* sandals and sword, his *Macbeth* spear, his *Bertuccio* bauble, the mace carried by him when acting *King Richard the Third*, the sceptre he used as *King Lear*, the hat he wore as *Petruchio*, his *Shylock* knife and scales, and his make-up box.

During October of 1876 Belasco worked for a short while with James W. Ward and Winnetta Montague (he appeared with them at the Grand Opera House, October 16, in "The Willing Hand"), as stage manager and as adapter and rectifier of several plays. On Sunday, October 22, he participated in a benefit for Katie Mayhew given at Baldwin's Theatre, appearing as *Doctor of the Hospital*, in "The Two Orphans." Soon after that, declining a minor position in a new company, headed



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by Eleanor Carey and organized for "a grand re-opening of the Grand Opera House" (effected November 13, with "Wanted, a Divorce"), he joined a travelling company, at Olympia, Washington, headed by Fanny Morgan Phelps, and for about three months resumed the precarious life of a strolling player.

### BELASCO AND "THE EGYPTIAN MYSTERY."

By about the beginning of February, 1877, Belasco was once more in San Francisco, and immediately allied himself, as playwright, stage manager, and actor, with Frank Gardner and his wife, Caroline Swain. Gardner,—who afterward turned his attention to gold mining in Australia and acquired great wealth,—had associated with himself a person familiar with the famous "Pepper's Ghost" illusion, and together they had devised a variant of that contrivance which was utilized in giving theatrical performances. Belasco, describing it, writes: "There was a stage, covered with black velvet, and a sheet of glass, placed obliquely over a space beneath the stage,—which was called the 'oven.' Gas lamps were ingeniously concealed so as to give the impression of a phosphorescent light from ghostlike bodies. The characters in the play were



obliged to enter the 'oven' under the black velvet, and to lie on their backs, while their misty shadows were thrown like watery impressions upon the glass plate. As these shadows floated across the surface of the glass, the people in the 'oven' could easily shake tables and move chairs to the hair-raising satisfaction of the audience."

Belasco appeared with the Gardners, at Egyptian Hall (No. 22 Geary Street, near Kearny), on February 16, as *The Destroyer*, in "The Haunted House"; *Valentine*, in an epitome of the "Faust" story (introducing the Duel Scene between *Faust* and *Valentine*), and *Mr. Trimeo*, in "The Mysterious Inn." On the next night he performed as *Avica, Spirit of Avarice*, in "A Storm of Thoughts," and *Phil Bouncer*, in "The Persecuted Traveller," as well as in "The Haunted House." On February 20 he personated *Our Guest*, in "Our Mysterious Boarding House," and on April 2, *Mark*, in "The Prodigal's Return." Belasco wrote all those plays, specially for use in Gardner's "Egyptian Mystery,"—as the entertainment was called,—and at least two others,—*"Wine, Women, and Cards,"* and *"The Christmas Night; or, The Convict's Return."* I have not found casts of the last named two, or record of the dates on which they were first produced. Belasco, besides playing the parts as above enumer-



# EGYPTIAN HALL.

No. 22 Geary Street.....Near Kearny  
FRANK FROST, BUSINESS MANAGER | PROF. J. H. GANNON, DIRECTOR  
R. A. CUNNINGHAM.....Treasurer | J. H. LeRoy.....Stage Manager

**Eighth and Positively the Last Week.**

**THIS EVENING.....APRIL 10**

And Every Evening during the week, the Entertainment will commence with a New and Original Drama, in 2 acts, (by a gentleman of this city), entitled **THE**

## Prodigal's Return

**Or, The Father's Dream.**

Jasper Ratcliff.....who has the dream.....J. H. LeRoy  
Mark.....The Brothers.....D. Belasco  
Charles.....a Constable.....L. Belmour  
Joyce.....Lawrence  
Heath.....H. George  
Bemon of Cards.....Senate  
May.....the Sister.....Miss Kitty Belmour  
Mary.....Faithful and True.....Miss Nellie Shapter  
Nellie.....a Woman of the World.....Miss Morris  
Angel.....with a good word for all.....Miss Ally McTabe

To be followed by a series of Wonderful Illusory Tableaux, illustrating the Life, Trials, Sickness and Death of

## LITTLE JIM!

**The Collier's Lad.**

TABLEAUX—1. The Sick Child. 2. The Mother's Prayer.  
3. The Angel's Whisper. 4. The Collier's Return.  
5. The Mother's Grief, and Tomb of Little Jim.

AFTER WHICH—

## Storm of Thoughts

Introducing another series of Illusions, which appear and disappear like phantoms from another world.

Rolando, Wood-Outter.....J. H. Leroy  
Avica, Spirit of Avarice.....D. Belasco  
Bac, Spirit of Wine.....L. Belmour  
Emelia.....Miss Nellie Shapter  
Fairy of Temperance.....Miss Kitty Belmour  
MORAL—Man should be contented with his lot in life, and never seek to change

To conclude with the Laughable Farce of

## Our Mysterious Boarding House

Our Guest.....D. Belasco  
Our Head.....J. H. LeRoy  
Our Body.....L. Belmour  
Our Carman.....Mr. Lawrence  
Our Ghost.....Louis  
Our Carpenter.....Mr. Langley  
Our Clown.....Hones  
Our Skeleton.....Miss Nellie Shapter  
Our Landlady.....Miss Kitty Belmour  
Our Domestic.....Miss Ally McTabe  
Our Boarder.....

During the piece some Wonderful as well as Comical Illusions will be presented representing the Mysterious and Diabolical proceedings of the Earthly and Unearthly.

From the Albert Davis Collection.  
A playbill of "The Egyptian Mystery," at Egyptian Hall, San Francisco, 1877. Belasco wrote all the plays named and recited "Little Jim." He was, also, actually the stage manager







ated, also gave various recitations at Egyptian Hall, with musical accompaniments,—among them his favorite “The Maniac,” “The Maiden’s Prayer,” and “Little Jim, the Collier’s Lad.” Recalling his alliance with Gardner, he writes the following bit of informative reminiscence: “Our ‘Mystery’ attracted much attention. ‘Egyptian Hall,’ if I remember correctly, had been a shop and was fitted up for our ‘show’ by Gardner. I remember that the *Faust* and *Valentine* Duel Scene made a great sensation, because my sword seemed to go *right through* the body of *Faust*. And the recitations were very effective, too. When I gave ‘Little Jim’ spirits seemed to float here and there, illustrating the sentiments of the lines. Our little theatre was packed night after night, and before the end of the engagement I was obliged to write about eight pieces for Gardner. I have often been asked if this was my first endeavor to experiment with stage lights. It was not. Some time before I had been working with locomotive headlights, and I had discovered the ease with which I could get certain effects by placing tin pans before oil lamps. Then it occurred to me that by means of colored silks,—my own forerunner of gelatine slides,—I could add further variations to colored lights, and it was after this experience that I began to pay particular atten-



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tion to the charm of stage lighting and to the inventions which, since then, have been so wonderfully developed."

### A REMINISCENCE OF HELENA MODJESKA.

The engagement at Egyptian Hall lasted until the middle of April; then Belasco travelled with the Gardners and their "Mystery," presenting the entertainments above mentioned and variations of them, until the end of July. From August to about October he appears to have been connected with the California Theatre: on August 18 he appeared there, in a performance given for the benefit of A. D. Billings, as *John O'Bibs*, in Boucicault's "The Long Strike" (billed on that occasion as "The Great Strike"), and as the *Earl of Oxford*, in the Fifth Act of "King Richard III." At this time, also, he witnessed the first appearance (August 20, 1877) on the American Stage of that lovely actress and still more lovely woman,—the gentle, beautiful, and ever lamented Helena Modjeska. She had gone to California, 1876, as one of a party of eight persons, Polish emigrants, who attempted to form a colony there, somewhat on the model of the Brook Farm movement. That attempt failing, Modjeska was compelled to turn again to the Stage,—in



Poland she had been among the leaders of the dramatic profession,—and after much difficulty she finally obtained, through the interest of Governor Salomon of California, a trial hearing by Barton Hill, stage manager for McCullough, at the California Theatre.

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[The following brief but interesting account of Modjeska's trial has been published, elsewhere, by my father. —J. W.]

Hill had little if any knowledge of the foreign Stage, and he knew nothing of Modjeska's ability and reputation. Her rare personal beauty, distinction, self-confidence, and persistence finally won from him a reluctant promise of a private hearing. That promise, after interposing several delays, he fulfilled, and Modjeska's story, as she told it to me, of her first rehearsal at the California Theatre was piquant and comic. Hill was a worthy man and a good actor. It was, no doubt, natural and right that, in dealing with a stranger applicant for theatrical employment, he should have exercised the functions of his position, but there will always be something ludicrous in the thought of Barton Hill sitting in judgment on Helena Modjeska. "He was very kind—Meester Hill," said the actress; "but he was ne-ervous and fussy, and he patronized me as though



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I were a leetle child. 'Now,' he said, 'I shall be very criti-cal—ve-ery *severe*.' I could be patient no longer: 'Be as criti-cal and severe as you like,' I burst out, 'only do, please, *be quiet*, and let us begin!' He was so surprised he could not speak, and I began at once a scene from 'Adrienne.' I played it through and then turned to him. He had his handkerchief in his hand and was crying. He came and shook hands with me and tried to seem quite calm. 'Well,' I asked, 'may I have the evening that I want?' 'I'll give you a week, and more, if I can,' he answered."

Before Hill's approval of Modjeska was ratified she was required to give another "trial rehearsal," at which McCullough and various other persons were present, and it was Belasco's privilege to be among them. "I don't believe she was called Modjeska in those days," he writes [her name was *Modrzejewska*—she shortened it to Modjeska at the suggestion of McCullough]; "but she had within her all the charm and power that afterward became associated with her name. I was in the auditorium the day she gave her first rehearsal [error—the second], and scattered here and there were a few critics. A mere handful came, for there was no general interest in one who was expected to have a gawky manner and a baffling accent. The unex-



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pected happened; those of us who heard her were literally stunned by the power and pathos of this woman. McCullough promised her a production and not long afterward she played 'Adrienne Lecouvreur.' When the performance was over, Mr. Barnes, of 'The San Francisco Call,' the other critics, and all of us knew that we had been listening to one of the world's great artists. 'It is the greatest piece of work in our day!' was the general verdict. McCullough was wild with enthusiasm. She played her repertory in San Francisco, and society took her into its arms."

### STROLLING *AD INTERIM*.—BELASCO AS "THE FIRST OLD WOMAN."

In September, 1877, during "Fair Week,"—24th to 29th,—Belasco was stage manager of a company from the California Theatre, headed by Thomas W. Keene, which performed at the Petaluma Theatre, in the California town of the same name, in "The Lady of Lyons," "The Young Widow," "The Hidden Hand" (Belasco's version), "Robert Macaire," "The Wife," "My Turn Next," "The Streets of New York," "The Rough Diamond," "Deborah," and "The People's Lawyer." Belasco, besides directing the stage, acted in those plays, respectively, as *Monsieur Deschappelles*, *Mandeville*, *Craven*



*Lenoir, Pierre, Lorenzo, Tom Bolus, Dan, Captain Blenham, Peter, and Lawyer Tripper.*

Soon after that he joined a company, under the management of Frank I. Frayne, known as the "Frayne Troupe," of which M. B. Curtis, "Harry" M. Brown, E. N. Thayer, Mrs. "Harry" Courtaine, Gertrude Granville, and Miss Fletcher were also members. He joined that company at Humboldt, Oregon, where the opening bill was "The Ticket-of-Leave Man." Belasco was to play *Melter Moss*, but the actress who was cast for *Mrs. Willoughby* becoming ill, Belasco (who knew all the other parts as well as his own) volunteered to take her place in that character and did so with such success that Frayne kept him in it: "I was scheduled to play all the first 'old women' that season," he writes to me, "and I found it for some time difficult to escape my new 'specialty.'"

#### A SUBSTANTIAL TRIBUTE.

Belasco left the "Frayne Troupe" about the end of January, 1878, and returned to San Francisco. There I trace him first at the Bush Street Theatre,—where he performed as *James Callin* and as *Pablo*, in the prologue and drama of "Across the Continent," then first presented, by





Photograph by Sarony.

Author's Collection.

**HELENA MODJESKA**

Soon after her first appearance in New York, 1877







## THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO 105

Oliver Doud Byron, in San Francisco,—and, a little later, back again at the Baldwin Theatre. He labored there, with short intermissions, as actor and stage manager, from March 26, 1878, to the latter part of September, 1879. On the former date the New York Union Square Theatre Company emerged at the Baldwin in "Agnes," in which Belasco played *Rudolphe*. During the engagement of the Union Square Company "One Hundred Years Old," "Saratoga," "A Celebrated Case," and Joaquin Miller's "The Danites" were presented under Belasco's direction, and, in each of them, he acted a subsidiary part. His services as director proved so valuable that when the engagement was ended and the company made a tour of Pacific Slope towns an arrangement was effected with Maguire whereby Belasco accompanied it. The tour lasted until the end of May, and it was followed by a brief return season in San Francisco. At its close the company, which included O'Neill, Charles B. Bishop, Rose Wood, and F. F. Mackay, presented to Belasco a purse of \$200 in gold "as an expression of appreciation of his services and esteem for himself." The presentation was made, in presence of the assembled company, on the stage of the Baldwin Theatre, by F. F. Mackay, who, in making it, read the following letter:



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*(F. F. Mackay, for the New York Union Square Theatrical Company, to David Belasco.)*

"DEAR MR. DAVID BELASCO:—

"In behalf of the members of the Union Square Company, I extend sincere thanks for your unvarying courtesy and for your able direction of our efforts. With our thanks are mingled a large measure of congratulations for your ability. Your quick apprehension and remarkable analytical ability in discovering and describing the mental intentions of an author are so superior to anything we have heretofore experienced that we feel sure that the position of master dramatic director of the American Stage must finally fall on you. Personally, I take great pleasure in thus expressing the feelings and the wishes of the company, and have the honor to subscribe myself,

"Yours truly,

"F. F. MACKAY."

### "OLIVIA" AND "PROOF POSITIVE."

On July 8 a revival was effected at the Baldwin of Boucicault's "The Octoroon," "re-touched and re-arranged" by Belasco. This, and a double bill, comprising Byron's "Dearer Than Life" and "The Post of Honor,"—brought out on August 5,—filled the summer season, and on September 2 Belasco's play in five acts entitled "Olivia,"—the first dramatization of Goldsmith's "The Vicar of Wakefield" to be acted in California,—was produced with the following notable cast:



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<i>Dr. Primrose</i> .....	A. D. Bradley.
<i>Squire Thornhill</i> .....	Lewis Morrison.
<i>Mr. Burchell</i> .....	James O'Neill.
<i>Moses</i> .....	William Seymour.
<i>George</i> .....	Forrest Robinson.
<i>Jenkinson</i> .....	C. B. Bishop.
<i>Olivia</i> .....	Rose Wood.
<i>Sophia</i> .....	Jean Burnside.
<i>Mrs. Primrose</i> .....	Mrs. Farren.
<i>Arabella Wilmot</i> .....	Belle Chapman.

Belasco's dramatic epitome adhered to Goldsmith's story as closely as is feasible for stage purposes; it was an effective play, it was admirably set upon the stage and acted, and it gained substantial success. "Those were strenuous times for me," he writes; "every one was thrusting duties on me then which, as I was always a glutton for work, I grasped as opportunities. One lesson I learned at the Baldwin which I have never forgotten—that one of the greatest mistakes a man can make is the mistake of permitting anybody else to do his work for him. I wrote 'Olivia' between times, as it were, and I was genuinely surprised by its success."

After the run of "Olivia" J. C. Williamson and his wife, "Maggie" Moore, came to the Baldwin,—opening in "Struck Oil,"—and Belasco, while directing the stage for them, completed an alteration of Wills' "A Woman of the People,"—which was



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brought forth October 14,—and a play, made at the request of Rose Wood, which he called “Proof Positive,” based on an old melodrama. This was produced on October 28, and in it James O’Neill gained a notable success in the character of an eccentric, semi-comic *Jew*.

### BELASCO’S VERSION OF “NOT GUILTY.”

Clara Morris made her first appearance in San Francisco at the Baldwin, November 4, as *Miss Multon*, and continued to act there for about eight weeks. During that time Belasco was able to bestow some attention and labor on an original play of his called “The Lone Pine,” in which he had acted at Sacramento and a few other “interior places” during a brief starring venture, and which he desired entirely to rewrite. In December, however, he was compelled to lay aside that work and turn again to hack playwrighting for the Baldwin company. His election fell on Watts Phillips’ old spectacle play of “Not Guilty,” which he altered and adapted in less than one week. It was announced as “The Grand Production of the Magnificent Musical, Military, Dramatic, and Spectacular (*sic*) Christmas Piece, which has been given for eight successive Christmas seasons in Philadelphia,”



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and it was produced for the first time at the Baldwin on December 24, 1878. This was the cast:

<i>Robert Arnold</i> .....	James O'Neill.
<i>Silas Jarrett</i> .....	Lewis Morrison.
<i>Jack Snipe</i> .....	C. B. Bishop.
<i>Isaac Vider</i> .....	J. W. Jennings.
<i>Joe Triggs</i> .....	James A. Herne.
<i>Trumble</i> .....	A. D. Bradley.
<i>St. Clair</i> .....	Forrest Robinson.
<i>Lal Singh</i> .....	William Seymour.
<i>Sergeant Wattles</i> .....	John N. Long.
<i>Polecat</i> .....	King Hedley.
<i>Alice Armitage</i> .....	Rose Wood.
<i>Polly Dobbs</i> .....	May Hart.

All the work of adaptation and stage management was done by Belasco—and for it he received the munificent payment of \$12.50 a performance. Recalling the production, he writes: “A ‘stock dramatist’ at that time was obliged to do his work on short notice, and it was taken as a matter of course that I should get a play ready for rehearsal in less than a week, and put it on in less than another week. ‘Not Guilty’ was very spectacular (*sic*), and with my customary leaning to warfare I introduced a Battle Scene, with several hundred people in an embarkation, as well as horses and cannon. This embarkation alone used to take ten



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minutes. It has all been done in many plays since—the booming of guns, the padding of the horses' hoofs on earth and stone, the moving crowds in sight and larger ones suggested, beyond the range of vision,—but this was the original, and it was wonderfully effective, if I do say it myself." Belasco's view agrees with that recorded by all competent observers of the time—one of the most conservative of whom wrote, in "The San Francisco Evening Bulletin," that "the Battle Scene, in the Fourth Act, was about the most realistic ever produced on the stage." An operatic chorus of more than eighty voices was employed and "The Cameron Cadets"—a local military organization—participated "in full Highland costume."

### WITHDRAWAL FROM THE BALDWIN.—"THE LONE PINE" AND DENMAN THOMPSON.

Belasco withdrew from the Baldwin Theatre company immediately after the "run" of "Not Guilty." He was in danger of becoming exhausted by overwork and he was resentful of mean treatment to which he had been subjected. Lewis Morrison, who had suggested Phillips' old spectacle for alteration, and Frederick Lyster, who had caused the introduction in it of music selected from the opera



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of "Carmen," by connivance with Maguire, charged a "royalty" of twelve per cent. against the gross receipts from representations of that play, although Belasco was paid for his service only about one per cent. This injustice, coming to the knowledge of Baldwin, greatly incensed him, and in order to remedy it he gave to Belasco \$1,000. With that sum added to his savings he felt at liberty to desist for a time from the exacting requirements of employment under Maguire, but in about two months he had resumed his old position, going back at the earnest request of Herne. In his "Story" he gives the following account of his experience in the interim:

"J. M. Hill, the pioneer of page advertising, brought Denman Thompson to the Bush Street Theatre in 'Joshua Whitcomb,' startling San Francisco by a lavish press work, which had never been heard of before. 'Young man,' Hill said to me, 'I want you to see Thompson, and to study him. If you find him a play, there may be a fortune in it for you.' When I met Thompson afterwards and he suggested that we collaborate, I told him that such a proposition was quite impossible, but that I had been working on a play not yet finished, ["The Lone Pine"] and that I would send it to him. I told him and Hill the gist of the story, and then and there the latter drew up a contract, giving me a retainer of \$1,000 and tempting me with the proposition that were the piece a success I might get eight hundred a week out of it. In due course of time I completed two acts and sent them



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on to him in New York. Soon I received a message: 'We like your manuscript. Bring acts three and four yourself. Railroad fares arranged.' When I reached New York I went to the Union Square Hotel and there met Hill and Thompson again. It was like giving a part of myself when I handed over the 'Third Act of 'The Lone Pine.' To my dismay, Thompson began to give suggestions, explaining what he intended to do, making of his part a youthful *Joshua Whitcomb*, with a fine sprinkling of slang and curses, and although I knew that if I could give this man a successful play I could make a fortune—thirty-two hundred a month, perhaps more!—I could not bring myself to do it. I went to my hotel and wrote Hill a letter, explaining the conclusion I had come to, and returning the thousand dollars retaining fee. But Hill would hear none of this and grew very angry trying to make me see Thompson's point of view and sending back the retainer. To avoid any further discussion, I boarded a train and left New York, having seen very little of the city. Hill's parting message was: 'If I don't produce that play, no one shall.' They never returned my manuscript, and years after, when I was stage-manager at the Madison Square, I thought that it would be a fitting successor to my 'May Blossom,' which I had just produced. So I went to Dr. Mallory and told him of the Thompson-Hill episode. He had a streak of the fighter in him, and suggested that I sue Hill for the recovery of the manuscript. After some preliminary proceedings we were persuaded that Hill had actually lost the manuscript, even though he still refused to release me from my contract. So the suit was withdrawn, for there was nothing to go upon.

"During the days when Hill was manager of the New York Standard Theatre we met again, and I did some work for him. It was then that he returned me my contract. Then,



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a miracle of miracles happened, at the time of the razing of the Union Square Hotel. The clerk sent for Mr. Ryan (who afterwards played in 'Naughty Anthony'), and told him that in one of the back rooms he had found a bundle of papers behind some old books. My lost manuscript was at last found! Some day, I may, finish it for David Warfield."

### "WITHIN AN INCH OF HIS LIFE."

Belasco was re-employed by Maguire during the first days of February, 1879, and he at once resumed his multiform labor as stage manager, prompter, and playwright. The Baldwin Theatre was profitably occupied by the Wilson, Primrose & West Minstrel Company and his first work was done at the Grand Opera House, which Maguire had leased, and where, February 17, "the legitimate company from Baldwin's" appeared in Belasco's dramatization of Gaboriau's story of "Within an Inch of His Life." This melodrama, advertised as "the most powerful play ever acted," was the product of "a week of strenuous days and sleepless nights," it was produced as a stopgap, and—so Belasco writes—"the makeshift, like so many accidental productions, was an instant success." That success was, in large part, due to a striking mechanical effect, devised and introduced by Belasco, representative of a conflagration, described in the



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newspapers of the day as "the terrific fire spectacle," about which its inventor has given me this information: "The fire was in the First Act. I did away with the lycopodium boxes and made my 'flames' by a series of red and yellow strips of silk, fanned from beneath by bellows and lit by colored lights. Some complaint was made of danger to the theatre and the authorities came upon the stage to investigate: they were a good deal nonplussed at finding the 'fire' nothing but pieces of silk!"

"Within an Inch of His Life" was acted at the Grand Opera House until March 1, when it was withdrawn to make way for "The Passion." This was the cast of its original production:

<i>Jules de Dardeville</i> .....	James O'Neill.
<i>Dr. Seignebos</i> .....	J. W. Jennings.
<i>Count de Clairnot</i> .....	James A. Herne.
<i>Falpin</i> .....	A. D. Bradley.
<i>Reibolt</i> .....	William Seymour.
<i>Gauchey</i> .....	John N. Long.
<i>Cocolean</i> .....	Lewis Morrison.
<i>Countess de Clairnot</i> .....	Rose Wood.
<i>Dionysia Chandore</i> .....	Katherine Corcoran.

### SALMI MORSE'S "PASSION PLAY."

At about the beginning of February, 1879, the popular and distinguished actor James O'Neill, now



long famous for his performance of *Monte Cristo*, became enthusiastically interested in a spectacle drama by Salmi Morse (1826-1884), called "The Passion Play," the presentment of which that author had long been earnestly but vainly endeavoring to effect, in San Francisco. O'Neill was desirous of impersonating *Jesus Christ*, a part to which he considered himself peculiarly fitted, and he presently succeeded in persuading Maguire, the manager, to produce Morse's drama. Baldwin was induced to provide financial support for the enterprise. Belasco was engaged as stage manager, after the preliminary rehearsals had been conducted under direction of Henry Brown, who officiated as prompter. Elaborate and handsome scenery was built and painted. Henry Widmer (1845-1895), in after years long associated with Daly's Theatre in New York, was employed as leader of the orchestra, and illustrative incidental music for the play was composed by him. Belasco rehearsed the company and superintended the stage. The first representation occurred on March 3, 1879, at the Grand Opera House, and it caused much public interest and controversy. O'Neill's impersonation of *Jesus* was fervently admired. Belasco, commenting on it and on its effect on "the poor people" whom he "saw on their knees, praying and sobbing," wrote that the actor, "with



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his delicacy, refinement, and grandeur, typified the real Prophet, and, I believe, to himself he *was* the Prophet."

### NOT THE OBERAMMERGAU DRAMA.

Morse's play was not the fabric customarily offered at Oberammergau, nor was it in any particular an imitation. In the declared opinion of Morse, an apostate Hebrew, that concoction had been devised and performed for the purpose of arousing and stimulating hostility against the Jews, and he profoundly disapproved of it. His purpose, he avowed, was simply to present an epitome of the life of Jesus, as described in the gospels. He had taken the thrifty precaution to read his play before an assemblage of the Roman Catholic clergy of San Francisco (the Protestant ecclesiastics not accepting his liberal invitation to enjoy that luxury), and it had received their approbation. Several of the holy fathers, indeed, had evinced their approval of it by kissing him on both his cheeks, and Archbishop Allemany, of San Francisco, had not only sanctioned the precious composition but had inserted several passages into the text with his own sacerdotal hand. The play was comprised in ten acts (at least, that was its form when, in 1880, in the vestibule of the Park Theatre, Broadway and Twenty-second Street,



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New York, I heard half of it read by the author and was permitted to inspect the whole manuscript), and it consisted of a long series of dialogues accompanied by pictures and tableaux. I know not whether the whole ten acts were vouchsafed to the San Francisco audience, but, according to contemporaneous records, the play gave much offence to many persons and was incentive to some public disturbances and breaches of the peace: ignorant Irish who witnessed it were so distempered that, on going forth, some of them, from time to time, assaulted peaceable Jews in the public streets—much in the spirit of the irate mariner who chanced to hear first of the Crucifixion nearly 2,000 years after it occurred. Belasco records that a committee of citizens called on Maguire and “worked upon his credulous nature until he believed that he was marked by the devil for sacrifice and would meet with instant death if he did not withdraw the play,” and that “in a fever of fear he closed the theatre,”—March 11. A little later, however, Maguire’s torrid temperature appears to have abated, and the play was again brought forward, April 15, at the Grand Opera House, but this time it was met by an injunction, issued from the Fourth (Municipal) District Court, Judge Robert Francis Morrison presiding, which, being disregarded, was followed by the arrest of O’Neill (who was imprisoned), April



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21, and of his professional associates, all of them, subsequently, being convicted of contempt of court and fined for that offence,—O'Neill \$50 and each of the other players \$5. Belasco escaped arrest through the kindly interference of the local Sheriff, a friend of his, who forcibly kept him away from the theatre when the other participants in the representation were being taken into police custody. The following notice appeared in "The Alta California," April 22, 1879:

"GRAND OPERA HOUSE.—The management has the honor to announce that in deference to public opinion 'The Passion' will no longer be presented."

### CONSTITUENTS OF MORSE'S PLAY.

There is nothing in Morse's play that could exert an immoral influence. There is no irreverence in either its spirit or its incidents. It is merely a goody-goody, tiresome composition, full of moral twaddle, and consisting in about equal degree of platitude and bombast. It purports to be written in blank verse, but it is, in fact, written in nondescript lines of unequal length, halting, irregular, formless, weak, and diffuse. Choruses of rhymed doggerel occur in it, at intervals, sometimes uttered by women, sometimes,—on the contrary,—by angels. Stress is



laid on the efforts of *Pontius Pilate* to save *Jesus* from the fury of the mob. There is a succession of pictures. In the Temple of Jerusalem many females appear, carrying babes, and a ferocious *Jew*, essaying to kill the infant *Jesus*, falls back astounded and overwhelmed by the aspect of the sacred infant. Later, *Joseph*, *Mary*, and the *Holy Child* are shown environed and protected by a branching sycamore tree, while, in the mountains all around them, many shrieking women and children are slaughtered by ruffianly soldiers. In a sequent picture *King Herod*, uttering a multiplicity of aphorisms, wrangles with his wife, *Herodias*, and the seductive *Salomé* dances before them and wins for her mother the head of her enemy, *John the Baptist*, which pleasing trophy, wrapped in a napkin, is brought in on a tray. *Jesus* and his disciples are then shown at the brook of Kedron. The agony of *Jesus* in the Garden of Gethsemane is depicted and the betrayal by *Judas*, the latter scene being double, to show, on one side, a lighted room in which is reproduced a semblance of "The Last Supper" according to the admired picture by Leonardo da Vinci, and on the other a gloomy range of plains and hills dimly lighted by the stars. In this scene passages from the New Testament are incorporated into Morse's play, in the part of *Jesus*. The arraignment of *Jesus* before



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*Pilate* follows, including the wrangle between the furious people and that clement magistrate, and ending with the investiture of *Jesus* with the Crown of Thorns. The final picture shows Golgotha, under a midnight sky, and the removal of the dead body from the Cross.

### AS TO PROPRIETY.

Salmi Morse, in conversation with me and my old comrade Dr. Charles Phelps, at the time of the reading in the vestibule of the Park Theatre, said that he began "The Passion Play" with the intention of writing a poem like Milton's "Paradise Lost," but soon discovered that the Byronic style, as evinced in "Cain," was more consonant than the Miltonic style with his subject and his genius, and accordingly determined to write not like Milton but like Byron; and he added that his drama was really not, at first, intended for the Stage, but for publication in a book. That was a discreet judgment, from which it is a pity that he ever departed. I have not, however, been able at any time to perceive what decisive *moral* reason there is why "The Passion Play" should not be presented on the stage. Reasons other than moral can readily be assigned: it is a matter of *Taste*, in which it is a gross injustice to employ the police



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power as a corrective, and a matter of *Public Policy*, in which, with due consideration, the police power can properly be invoked. Familiar treatment of things widely considered sacred is, perhaps, likely to lower them, except with very ignorant persons, in sanctity and dignity, and certainly it does lower them with many persons of fine intelligence and taste. In the end of a church in Heidelberg there is, or was, visible, through a long window, a full-length effigy of Christ on the Cross, which swings to and fro as a pendulum to the clock, and in a church at Mayence there is a life-size figure of the Virgin Mary, seated, with the body of the dead Christ, also life-size, lying across her knees. I remember looking on those objects with aversion. To *see*, in a theatre, a man, impersonating the *Christ*, washing the feet of another man will, generally, give offence. Religious bigotry is a curse to civilization, and nothing should be conceded to it, but certainly the scruples of religious persons should receive reasonable respect.

### "THE PASSION PLAY" IN NEW YORK.

After the suppression of his "Passion Play" in California Morse brought it to New York and offered it to Henry E. Abbey, then a prominent



speculative manager, who, for a time, entertained the purpose of producing it at Booth's Theatre. A drop curtain was painted, showing a flight of angels toward Heaven on Easter morning, and the purpose of Morse was made known to remove the statue of Shakespeare from the top of the proscenium arch and to substitute a large cross in its place. Obstacles intervened,—disapproval, voiced in the newspaper press, being one of them, and the destruction of Abbey's New Park Theatre by fire (October 30, 1882), in which conflagration all the costumes were destroyed, being another,—and that project was abandoned. Prior to that mishap Morse gave a reading of the play, December 3, 1880, at the Cooper Institute; and later, February-April, 1883, ineffectual efforts were made by the author (which brought him before Judge George C. Barrett, of the New York Supreme Court) to present it in a house which he rented and called Salmi Morse's Temple (afterward known as Proctor's Twenty-third Street Theatre). His endeavors were finally blocked by an injunction, and the venture was heard of no more. Belasco was in New York at the time of Morse's attempt to have his "Passion Play" represented there, and Morse wished him to undertake the stage direction of it, but being otherwise employed, and also clearly perceiving the public antipathy to the proj-



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ect, he discreetly declined to participate in the enterprise. On February 22, 1884, the unfortunate Morse met death by drowning, in the Hudson River, near Harlem, and he was thought to have committed suicide.

### BELASCO'S SERVICES TO MORSE'S ENTERPRISE.

The successful presentment of Morse's play in California was due to the sincerity and ability of O'Neill and to the ardent enthusiasm of Belasco, who revelled in the opportunities which he discovered for pictorial display: he explored every accessible source for paintings to be copied and for suggestions as to costume, color, and "atmosphere," and, particularly, he made use of every expedient of "realistic" effect. Belasco writes of this: "I had seen 'The Passion Play' in Europe, but, without prejudice, our little far-western town held the honors." That statement involves a slip of memory. He had, in March, 1879, been as far east as New York, but his first visit to Europe did not occur till 1884. His view of the Oberammergau performance was obtained long after the presentment of Morse's play in San Francisco. The following reminiscence by Belasco of the California representation of "The Passion Play" is instructive:



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"How we scoured San Francisco,—school, church, and theatre,—for people to put in our cast! Every actor who was out of employment was sure of finding something to do in our mob scenes. I cannot conceive, in the history of the Theatre, a more complete or a more perfect cast.

"We engaged 200 singers; we marshalled 400 men, women, children, and infants in our *ensembles*. And in the preparation every one seemed to be inspired. . . . O'Neill, as the preparations progressed, grew more and more obsessed. He gave up smoking; all the little pleasures of life he denied himself. Any man who used a coarse word during rehearsals was dismissed. He walked the streets of the city with the expression of a holy man on his face. Whenever he drew near a hush prevailed such as one does not often find outside a church. The boards of the stage became Holy Land.

"I also became a veritable monomaniac on the subject; I was never without a Bible under my arm. I went to the Mercantile Library and there studied the color effects in the two memorable canvases there hung, depicting the dance of Salomé and the Lord's Supper. My life seemed changed as never before, and once more my thoughts began to play with monastery life, and I thought of the days spent in Vancouver with my priest friend.

"The play traced the whole sequence of historical events leading to the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, and I remember how many effects we had to evolve for ourselves. In the Massacre of the Innocents we had a hundred mothers on the stage, with their babes in their arms. In the scene where *Joseph* and *Mary* came down the mountain side we had a flock of real sheep following in their wake. The entire performance was given with a simplicity that amounted to grandeur. All was accomplished by fabrics and stage lighting, and when O'Neill came up from his



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dressing room and appeared on the stage with a halo about him women sank on their knees and prayed, and when he was stripped and dragged before *Pontius Pilate*, crowned with a crown of thorns, many fainted.

"I have produced many plays in many parts of the world, but never have I seen an audience awed as by 'The Passion Play.' The greatest performance of a generation was the *Christus* of James O'Neill."

"The Passion Play" was succeeded at the Grand Opera House by a melodrama entitled "The New Babylon," produced under the stage management of Belasco; and, on May 5, at the Baldwin, an adaptation by him of Sardou's "La Famille Benoiton!" was brought out under the name of "A Fast Family." This was performed for a fortnight, during which Belasco wrote a play which he called "The Millionaire's Daughter," and contrived for its presentment a remarkably handsome and effective scenic investiture.

### "THE MILLIONAIRE'S DAUGHTER."

Bronson Howard's play of "The Banker's Daughter" (one act of which was written by A. R. Cazanran) was produced, for the first time, November 30, 1878, at the Union Square Theatre, New York, where it held the stage till April 16, 1879, receiving 187 performances. It was regarded as one of the



"sensations" of the time, and Maguire, desiring to secure its presentment at the Baldwin Theatre, began negotiations to that end with Palmer early in 1879. Palmer named terms that Maguire would not, or could not, meet and they were rejected. But a new play was urgently required for the Baldwin, and Maguire turned to Belasco, asking, "Can't you make something for us on similar lines?" Belasco readily agreed to do this, but presently expressed doubt as to Baldwin's consent to pay the heavy price of certain novel expedients of stage-setting which he wished to use.

"In my principal scene," he said to me, "I wanted a striking, new effect,—walls of a delicate pink, hung with rich lace, and I knew it would cost a lot. I went to Baldwin about it, after talking to Maguire, who thought it impossible, and told him the story of my play, and what I wanted to do in the way of settings, and my fear about expenses. Baldwin said, 'I understand Palmer's coming out here, to the California, with "The Banker's Daughter." I think he tried to stick us up on that piece, and I'd like to beat him. We don't need to go to so much expense as you think, Davy. You say you want laces: well, I'll let you have some lace, such as nobody has ever seen on a stage!' And he did. It was real antique stuff, belonging to his daughter



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and himself, from their home. I designed the scene as I wanted it, had plain set pieces painted (they cost us only a few dollars) in delicate shades of pink, and draped Baldwin's lace over them. The effect was beautiful,—I've never seen anything of the kind as good,—and it *looked* like the room of 'a millionaire's daughter.' But I was glad when the run was over and the stuff safely back in Baldwin's home: there was over \$80,000 worth of it used in that set, and it kept me anxious all the time."

Belasco's play of "The Millionaire's Daughter" was produced at the Baldwin Theatre on May 19, 1879, and it was received with much favor. It tells the story of a woman who marries one man while believing herself to be in love with another, but who comes, through an ordeal of sorrow and suffering, to know the value of her husband and to love him. It is not important, though creditable as a melodramatic specimen of what Augustin Daly used to describe as "plays of contemporaneous human interest." The chief parts in it were cast as follows:

<i>Mortimer Rushton</i> .....	James O'Neill.
<i>Richard Trevellian</i> .....	Lewis Morrison.
<i>Adam Trueman</i> .....	A. D. Bradley.
<i>Stephen Snarley</i> .....	J. W. Jennings.
<i>Ulysses S. Danripple, N. Y., U. S. A.</i> .....	James A. Herne.
<i>Timothy Tubbs</i> .....	David Belasco.



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*Ethel Trueman*.....Rose Wood.  
*Mabel St. Everard*.....Katherine Corcoran.  
*Aunt Sophie*.....Kate Denin.

Belasco was at once accused of having stolen his play from "The Banker's Daughter," but on investigation by Palmer's representative it promptly appeared that the charge was unwarranted. "The chief real resemblances," said Belasco, "are the title and the Duel Scene. We did call my play 'The Millionaire's Daughter' because of the success of Howard's piece: the Duel Scene, however, I took from 'The Corsican Brothers.' Howard, probably, took his from the same source; nobody acquainted with the theatre could very well help knowing that scene!"

The situation alluded to is an old one and it has been often used. The scene is a glade in the woods. The duellists, attended by their seconds, are confronted, each intent on homicide. The time is night-fall. The ground is thinly covered with snow. Each of the combatants is attired in a white shirt, open at the neck, without collar; black trousers and shoes. A faint twilight is diffused over the picture, and the ominous, grisly effect of it is enhanced by low, minor music. Gleaming rapiers are engaged and the combat proceeds to its fatal close: few other situations have been made the occasion of as much



ridicule; yet, fashioned with care and treated with sincerity, this one never fails to thrill the spectators,—and probably it never will.

Palmer's production of "The Banker's Daughter" was announced for presentment at the California Theatre on June 9, 1879; but the success of Belasco's play, at the Baldwin, led to the cancellation by Palmer of his engagement in San Francisco, and Howard's play, in its definitive form, was not acted there until long afterward: it had, however, previously been performed there under the name of "Lillian's Lost Love."

DETRACTION OF BELASCO.—EARLY CALIFORNIA  
INFLUENCES.

Those persons who intellectually and influentially rise above the level of mediocrity almost invariably find their attainments denied, their achievements belittled, their motives impugned, and their characters besmirched. Belasco has had a liberal experience of detraction. One of the most insistent disparagements that have followed him is the charge that, in the course of his long career as a manager in New York, he has never produced any of the plays of Shakespeare, for the reason that he does not possess either the knowledge, taste, training, or



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ability requisite for their suitable presentment. It is true that Belasco, since becoming a theatrical manager in New York, has not, as yet, produced any play of Shakespeare's or any of the standard old legitimate dramas. That, doubtless, has been a loss to the public; but deferring, for the moment, scrutiny of reasons that have restrained him from such ventures, it will be pertinent and instructive here to consider the question of his competence to make such revivals,—because such consideration necessarily concerns itself with the theatrical environment in which he grew up and in which he received his early training. As bearing on such an examination a glance at the antecedents of the San Francisco Stage will be helpful. The Circus preceded the Theatre in California, but only by a few weeks. Two circus companies were performing in San Francisco early in 1849. The first dramatic performance given in that city occurred in the same year, in a building called Washington Hall. In the same year, also, the first regular theatre built in the State was opened, in Sacramento: it cost \$80,000 and it was called the Eagle. James H. McCabe,—a good friend to Belasco in later years,—was a member of its first company. Other theatres built subsequently in Sacramento were the Tehama, the Pacific, the American, and





From an old photograph.

Belasco's Collection.

**BELASCO AS *ARMAND DUVAL*, IN "CAMILLE"**







the Edwin Forrest. The dramatic movement, once started, became vigorous and swift. In 1851, in San Francisco, the Jenny Lind and the American theatres were built, and in 1853 a spacious and handsome playhouse was erected, called the Metropolitan, and also a theatre called the Adelphi was opened, in which performances were given in French. Among the managers who were active and prominent in early California days were Wesley Venua, John S. Potter, Joseph Rowe, Charles Robert Thorne (the Elder), Daniel Wilmarth Waller, George Ryer, Charles A. King, McKean Buchanan, J. B. Booth, Jr., and Samuel Colville,—the latter subsequently so widely known and so popular in New York. Among actors of the period who were local favorites were James Stark, James H. Warwick, William Barry, "Dan" Virgil Gates, John Woodard, Edward N. Thayer, Frank Lawlor, John Dunn (often jocosely styled "Rascal Jack"), Elizabeth Jefferson (Mrs. Thoman, afterwards Mrs. Saunders), Mrs. Emanuel Judah (Marietta Starfield Torrence), Mary Woodard, and Marie Duret,—"the limpet," once for some time associated with Gustavus Vaughan Brooke (and so called because she "stuck to him" till she had accumulated considerable money and jewelry, and then left him; she seems to have been a



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great annoyance). Before Belasco's birth (1858) the Drama had become well established in California, and during his boyhood there and his early professional association with it,—that is, from about 1865 to 1882,—its condition was generally prosperous, often brilliant. Within that period the San Francisco Stage was illumined by actors of every description, some of them being of the highest order as well as of the brightest renown. Belasco's personal association with the Theatre, as has been shown, began in infancy; his earliest impressions were imbued with histrionic and dramatic influence. Charles Kean, Edwin Forrest, and Julia Dean were figures in his childish mind that he never could forget. Among the notable actors whom he saw, with many of whom at one time or another he was actively associated, and among whom are numbered some men and women whose histrionic genius has not been surpassed, were Catharine Sinclair, Matilda Heron, James E. Murdoch, James William Wallack, the Younger; Charles Wheatleigh, William A. Mestayer, John Wilson, Mrs. Saunders, Kate Denin, John Collins, Mrs. Poole, John E. Owens, Edwin Adams, Walter Montgomery, James Stark, Edward A. Sothorn, Frank Mayo, Barry Sullivan, Edwin Booth, James O'Neill, Lewis Morrison, Eben Plympton, John Brougham, James A. Herne,



Frank S. Chanfrau, James F. Cathcart, William H. Crane, (Charles) Barton Hill, W. J. Florence and Mrs. Florence, Barney Williams and Mrs. Williams, Benedict De Bar, George Rignold, George Fawcett Rowe, Charles F. Coghlan, W. E. Sheridan, Mrs. D. P. Bowers, Adelaide Neilson, William Horace Lingard and Mrs. Lingard (Alice Dunning), Lotta (Charlotte Crabtree), Charlotte Thompson, Carlotta Leclercq, Neil Warner, Daniel E. Bandmann, Minnie Palmer, Jean Davenport Lander, Mrs. F. M. Bates, Sallie A. Hinckley, Dion Boucicault, Katharine Rodgers, Helena Modjeska, and Rose Coghlan. Those, and many more, were not mere *names* to Belasco: they were the vital, active personification of all that he most loved and desired—the Stage. The environment of his youth, allowing for all the trials and hardships to which incidentally he was subjected, must, obviously, have been conducive to the opening and enlightenment of his mind, the direction of his efforts into the theatrical field, the development of his latent powers, his education as actor, dramatist, and stage manager, and the building of his character. He was a sensitive, highly impressionable youth, possessed of an artistic temperament, romantic disposition, innate histrionic and dramatic faculties, ardent ambition to excel, eager



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interest in life, abundant capability of enjoyment, an almost abnormal power of observation,—that “clutching eye” which has been well ascribed to Dickens,—and a kindness of heart that made him instantly and eagerly sympathetic with every form of human trial and suffering. Such a youth could not fail to respond to some, at least, of the improving influences to which he was exposed. In the ministrations of such men and women as I have named he saw the rapid and splendid growth of the Theatre in California, the swift accession to the number of fine playhouses,—the building of Maguire’s Opera House (afterward the Bush Street Theatre), the California Theatre, Shields’ Opera House, Maguire’s New Theatre, and Baldwin’s Academy of Music,—and with all of them, and with others, he became, at one time or another and in one way or another, connected. He was given exceptional and invaluable opportunities of studying the respective styles and learning the divergent methods of every class of actor and stage manager. He saw the thorough devotion, the patient endeavor, the astonishing variety, and the first splendid successes of John McCullough, who went to San Francisco with Edwin Forrest, in 1866, and there laid the foundation of his renown. He saw the intensely earnest, highly intellectual, inces-



santly laborious, passionately devoted and indomitable Lawrence Barrett, who made his first appearance in San Francisco, February 13, 1868, at Maguire's Opera House, as *Hamlet*, and he saw many of the great plays, finely produced and nobly acted, which were given at the California Theatre, in the season when it was opened, January 11, 1869, under the joint management of Barrett and McCullough. Observance of such a dramatic company as those managers then assembled was in itself an education for any young enthusiast and student of the art of acting, and it is reasonable to believe that this youth profited by it. The company, certainly, was such a one as could not anywhere be assembled now, because most of the actors of that strain have passed away. Barrett held the first position, dividing some of the leading business with McCullough. William H. Sedley-Smith was the stage manager. Other members of the company were Henry Edwards, John T. Raymond, "Willie" Edouin, Claude Burroughs, John Torrence, J. E. Marble, John Wilson, Edward J. Buckley, W. Caldwell, Frederick Franks, W. F. Burroughs, H. King, Henry Atkinson, E. B. Holmes, Emilie Melville, Annette Ince, Marie Gordon, Mrs. E. J. Buckley, Mrs. F. Franks, Mrs. Charles R. Saunders, and Mrs. Judah. The plays presented



were of all kinds and generally of the highest order. Belasco was fortunate in possessing the special favor of the stage manager, and he was permitted many chances of seeing those players. The special idols of his boyish admiration were John McCullough, Walter Montgomery, and Mrs. Bowers. As to Shakespeare—his mother was a lover of the dramatist and a careful student of him, and she early began to instruct her boy in the study of his characters and in the acting of scenes from the plays: one of the first books he ever owned was a large single volume edition of Shakespeare, which, to gratify his childish longing, was sent to him, "from New York," because he believed nothing could be as fine as what came from that place. "I read it," he told me, "from the title-page to the last word, with a dictionary and a glossary." He saw many of the plays of Shakespeare set upon the stage, by some of the most accomplished, conscientious, and scholarly actors and stage managers that have served the art—men and women the capabilities and achievements of any one of whom, in the stage production of Shakespeare, would shame the abilities of all Belasco's detractors combined,—and he participated, not only as actor but as stage manager, in the representation of those plays. The works of Shakespeare which were thus made





DAVID BELASCO AS MARK ANTONY,  
IN "JULIUS CAESAR"

*"I will not do them wrong: I rather choose  
To wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you,  
Than I will wrong such honorable men!"*

—Act III, sc. 2

Photograph by Bradley, San Francisco.  
Original loaned by Mrs. David Belasco.



-Act III, sc. 2

"I will not do them wrong; I rather choose  
To wrong the dead, to wrong myself, and you,  
Than I will wrong such poor unfortunates."

DAVID BELASCO AS MARK ANTONY  
IN "JULIUS CAESAR"

Produced by the Booth Theatre Company  
under the direction of Mr. George C. Fox











familiar to him, in their technical aspect, are "King Richard III." (Cibber's version), "Hamlet," "Othello," "Romeo and Juliet," "Julius Cæsar," "Macbeth," "King John," "King Lear," "Coriolanus," "Cymbeline," "Measure for Measure," "The Comedy of Errors," "Much Ado About Nothing," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "The Merchant of Venice," "Katharine and Petruchio" (Garrick's version), "Twelfth Night," and "As You Like It." He played all sorts of parts in Shakespeare, from the slightest to some of the greatest: in San Francisco he would play anything,—the *Salanios*, *Guildesterns*, *First Messengers*, *Citizens*, etc., and frequently go on as a super,—merely to gain opportunity to be on the stage with the leaders of his profession, in order that he might observe them. Fired with emulous ambition, he would then obtain employment in any travelling or barnstorming company in which he could play some of the greater parts, and in that way,—acting, of course, at first in imitation of various distinguished players whose performances he had witnessed, but also, more and more as his experience grew, along experimental lines of his own contrivance,—he played, among other parts, *Mercutio*, *Marc Antony*, *Friar Lawrence* and *Hamlet*. He also sometimes acted women;—in Shakespeare, notably, the *Nurse*, in



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"Romeo and Juliet," and *Queen Gertrude*, in "Hamlet." In short, the truth, respecting Belasco and his qualification for producing Shakespeare's dramas, is that he is better qualified to present them than any other stage manager in America. His abstention from that field has been due to a variety of causes, chief among them being that, at first, while he was fighting his way to a position in which he could produce *anything*, and immediately after his achievement of that independence, the field of Shakespearean acting was almost exclusively occupied by famous, popular, and prosperous stars, who did not need his services, having their own, and with whom he must have vainly contended in an unequal rivalry; and, later, that there was an almost complete dearth of qualified Shakespearean performers. That dearth might not be so nearly complete now if Belasco had earlier turned his attention to the production of Shakespeare: on the other hand, he had to *win* his place before he could fill it,—and the carpers who censure him for what he has not done would, in most instances, have been as vigorous in censure if he had brought out plays of Shakespeare as they have been because he has not: what they actually seek for is any ground for fault-finding. Belasco's sound sense and good judgment were well shown in a recent



conversation with me, relative to David Warfield's ambition to play *Shylock*: "Warfield," he said, "is wild to play *Shylock*, and is at me every little while to bring out 'The Merchant.' I'd like to do it, but it isn't practical just now, and so I tell him, 'Wait, wait,'—though he doesn't want to *wait*! But it would be foolish at present: to-day 'Dave' Warfield is one of the most prosperous of actors: he can play 'The Music Master,' and 'The Auctioneer,' and make a fortune—just as Jefferson did with 'Rip' and 'The Rivals.' But what will happen if I bring him out as *Shylock*, at once, in New York, or close to it? A lot of the paltry scribblers who don't know anything about 'The Merchant' will have their knives into him up to the hilt—and the next morning, whether he's good, bad, or indifferent, he'll be the best 'roasted' actor on the stage—the venture will be no good, and when he goes back to 'The Music Master' his standing will have been hurt. *Nobody* can give a great performance of *Shylock* the first time. When we are ready, I'll take a modest little company out into the backwoods somewhere, so far away from New York that nobody here knows there are such places, and let Warfield play *Shylock* for three months or so. Then, when he's found himself and can show what he can really do, if it's no good we'll drop it, and



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if (as I expect) it turns out great, I'll bring him into New York and give them such a production as they haven't seen since Irving played the piece." That is the clear, right, prescient insight of an authentic theatrical manager, who understands that a vital part of the management of the Theatre consists in management of the People.

### BELASCO'S REPERTORY AS AN ACTOR.

A complete list of the characters that Belasco assumed, while he remained an actor, is not obtainable, but the subjoined partial list, which I have carefully made by consulting newspaper advertisements and other sources of authentic information, is sufficiently suggestive of his ample experience in the vocation of acting. The student of his career should heedfully bear in mind, moreover, that he has, first and last, set on the stage every one of the plays here named (and many others), besides acting in them:





Photograph by Falk.

The Albert Davis Collection.

BELASCO, ABOUT 1880







# THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO 141

## PART.

## PLAY.

### (A)

<i>Alfred Evelyn</i> .....	"Money."
<i>Antonio</i> .....	"The Merchant of Venice."
<i>Apothecary</i> .....	"Romeo and Juliet."
<i>Archibald Carlyle</i> .....	"East Lynne."
<i>Armand Duval</i> .....	"Camille."
<i>Avica, the Spirit of Avarice</i> .....	"A Storm of Thoughts."

### (B)

<i>Baldwin</i> .....	"Ireland and America."
<i>Benvolio</i> .....	"Romeo and Juliet."
<i>Bernardo</i> .....	"Hamlet."
<i>Biondello</i> .....	"Katharine and Petruchio."
<i>Black Donald</i> .....	"The Hidden Hand."
<i>Bleeding Sergeant</i> .....	"Macbeth."
<i>Bloater</i> .....	"Maum Cre."
<i>Bob</i> .....	"The Black Hand."
<i>Bob Brierly</i> .....	"The Ticket-of-Leave Man."
<i>Bob Rackett</i> .....	"Help."
<i>Box</i> .....	"Box and Cox."
<i>Buddicombe</i> .....	"Our American Cousin."
<i>Butler</i> .....	"Man and Wife."

### (C)

<i>Captain Blenham</i> .....	"The Rough Diamond."
<i>Captain Crosstree</i> .....	"Black-Ey'd Susan."
<i>Charles Oakley</i> .....	"The Jealous Wife."
<i>Château-Renaud</i> .....	"The Corsican Brothers."
<i>Claude Melnotte</i> .....	"The Lady of Lyons."
<i>Clifford</i> .....	"The Hunchback."
<i>Colonel Dent</i> .....	"The Governess."
<i>Conner O'Kennedy</i> .....	"Green Bushes."
<i>Cool</i> .....	"London Assurance."
<i>Cox</i> .....	"Box and Cox."
<i>Craven Lenoir</i> .....	"The Hidden Hand."



## 142 THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO

### PART.

### PLAY.

#### (D)

<i>Dan</i> .....	"The Streets of New York."
<i>Danny Mann</i> .....	"The Colleen Bawn."
<i>Darley</i> .....	"Dark Deeds."
<i>Dauphin</i> .....	"King Louis XI."
<i>De Mauprat</i> .....	"Richelieu."
<i>DeWilt</i> .....	"Under the Gas-Light."
<i>Dickory</i> .....	"The Spectre Bridegroom."
<i>Doctor of Hospital</i> .....	"The Two Orphans."
<i>Dolly Spanker</i> .....	"London Assurance."
<i>Don Caesar</i> .....	"Donna Diana."
<i>Duke of Burgundy</i> .....	"King Lear."

#### (E)

<i>Earl of Oxford</i> .....	"King Richard III."
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#### (F)

<i>Fagin</i> .....	"Oliver Twist."
<i>First Citizen</i> .....	"Julius Cæsar."
<i>First Dwarf</i> .....	"Rip Van Winkle."
<i>First Fury</i> .....	"Pluto."
<i>First Grave-Digger</i> .....	"Hamlet."
<i>First Officer</i> .....	"Macbeth."
<i>First Policeman</i> .....	"Little Don Giovanni."
<i>Fournechet, Minister of Finance</i> .....	"A Life's Revenge."
<i>Francesco</i> .....	"Hamlet."
<i>Frank Breezly</i> .....	"Katy."
<i>Friar Lawrence</i> .....	"Romeo and Juliet."
<i>Furnace, the Cook</i> .....	"A New Way to Pay Old Debts."

#### (G)

<i>Galeas</i> .....	"The Enchantress."
<i>Gaspard</i> .....	"The Lady of Lyons."
<i>Gaston</i> .....	"Camille."



## THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO 143

PART.	PLAY.
<i>Genius of the Ring</i> .....	"The Wonderful Scamp, or Aladdin No. 2."
<i>George Sheldon</i> .....	"Uncle Tom's Cabin."
<i>Gilbert Gates</i> .....	"The Dawn of Freedom."
<i>Gringoire</i> .....	"The Ballad Monger."
<i>Guildestern</i> .....	"Hamlet."
<i>Gyp</i> .....	"Saratoga."
(H)	
<i>Hamlet</i> .....	"Hamlet."
<i>Harvey</i> .....	"Out at Sea."
<i>Heinrich Vedder</i> .....	"Rip Van Winkle."
<i>Hon. Bob Penley</i> .....	"Fritz in a Madhouse."
(I)	
<i>Idiot, the</i> .....	"The Idiot of the Mountain."
(J)	
<i>James Callin</i> .....	"Across the Continent." (Prologue.)
<i>Jasper Pidgeon</i> .....	"Meg's Diversion."
<i>Job Armroyd</i> .....	"Lost in London."
<i>John O'Bibs</i> .....	"The Long Strike."
<i>Johnson</i> .....	"The Lancashire Lass."
<i>Joseph Surface</i> .....	"The School for Scandal."
(K)	
<i>King Louis the Eleventh</i> .....	"King Louis XI."
(L)	
<i>Laertes</i> .....	"Hamlet."
<i>Lawyer Marks</i> .....	"Uncle Tom's Cabin."
<i>Lawyer Tripper</i> .....	"Solon Shingle" ("The People's Lawyer.")
<i>Lieutenant</i> .....	"Don Cæsar de Bazan."
<i>Lieutenant Victor</i> .....	"The Lion of Nubia."
<i>Le Beau</i> .....	"As You Like It."



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## PART.

## PLAY.

*Lorenzo* ..... "The Wife."

*Louis* ..... "One Hundred Years Old."

### (M)

*Maffeo Orsini* ..... "Lucretia Borgia."

*Major Hershner* ..... "Twice Saved."

*Malcolm* ..... "Macbeth."

*Mandeville* ..... "The Young Widow."

*Marc Antony* ..... "Julius Cæsar."

*Marco* ..... "The Wife."

*Mark* ..... "The Prodigal's Return."

*Mark Meddle* ..... "London Assurance."

*Marquis* ..... "The Pearl of Savoy."

*Master Walter* ..... "The Hunchback."

*Mateo, the Landlord* ..... "The Beauty and the Brigands."

*Melter Moss* ..... "The Ticket-of-Leave Man."

*Mercutio* ..... "Romeo and Juliet."

*Mr. Ellingham* ..... "Hearts of Oak."

*Mr. Honeyton* ..... "A Happy Pair."

*Mr. Trimeo* ..... "The Mysterious Inn."

*Mr. Toodle* ..... "The Toodles."

*Mrs. Cornelia* ..... "East Lynne."

*Mrs. Willoughby* ..... "The Ticket-of-Leave Man."

*Modus* ..... "The Hunchback."

*Mons. Deschappelles* ..... "The Lady of Lyons."

*Moses* ..... "The School for Scandal."

*Mother Frochard* ..... "The Two Orphans."

### (N)

*Nathan* ..... "Leah the Forsaken."

*Nick o' the Woods (the Jibbe-*

*nainosay, The Avenger, Reginald*

*Ashburn, Bloody Nathan, and The*

*Spirit of The Water)* ..... "The Jibbenainosay."



## THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO 145

### PART.

### PLAY.

*Nick Vedder*....."Rip Van Winkle."  
*Nurse*....."Romeo and Juliet."

(O)

*Our Guest*....."Our Mysterious Boarding House."

(P)

*Pablo, the Harpist*....."Across the Continent."  
*Page*....."Mary Stuart."  
*Paris*....."Romeo and Juliet."  
*Pedro*....."A Yankee in Cuba."  
*Peter*....."Deborah."  
*Peter Bowbells*....."The Illustrious Stranger."  
*Peter True*....."The Statue Lover."  
*Peter White*....."Mr. and Mrs. Peter White."  
*Phil Bouncer*....."The Persecuted Traveller."  
*Philip Ray*....."Enoch Arden."  
*Pierre*....."Robert Macaire."  
*Pietre*....."The Enchantress." (Prologue.)  
*Player Queen*....."Hamlet."  
*Polonius*....."Hamlet."  
*Polydor*....."Ingomar."  
*Prince Saucilita*....."The Gold Demon."  
*Pumpernickel*....."The Child of the Regiment."

(Q)

*Queen Gertrude*....."Hamlet"

(R)

*Ralph*....."The Lighthouse Cliff."  
*Raphael (and Phidias)*....."The Marble Heart."  
*Ratcliff*....."King Richard III."  
*Reuben*....."Schermerhorn's Boy."  
*Richard Hare*....."East Lynne."  
*Richmond*....."King Richard III."  
*Robert Landry*....."The Dead Heart."



## 146 THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO

### PART.

### PLAY.

<i>Robert Macaire</i> .....	"Robert Macaire."
<i>Rory O'More</i> .....	"Rory O'More."
<i>Rosencrantz</i> .....	"Hamlet."
<i>Ruby Darrell</i> .....	"Hearts of Oak."
<i>Rudolph</i> .....	"Leah the Forsaken."
<i>Rudolphe</i> .....	"Agnes."

### (S)

<i>Salanio</i> .....	"The Merchant of Venice."
<i>Sambo</i> .....	"Uncle Tom's Cabin."
<i>Santo</i> .....	"Gaspardo."
<i>Secretary</i> .....	"Richelieu."
<i>Second Player</i> .....	"Hamlet."
<i>Selim</i> .....	"The Forty Thieves."
<i>Signor Mateo</i> .....	"The Miser's Daughter."
<i>Simon Lullaby</i> .....	"A Conjugal Lesson."
<i>Simon Legree</i> .....	"Uncle Tom's Cabin."
<i>Simon, the Cobbler</i> .....	"Marie Antoinette."
<i>Sir Francis Leveson</i> .....	"East Lynne."
<i>Slave</i> .....	"Pygmalion and Galatea."
<i>Spada</i> .....	"The Woman in Red."
<i>Stuttering Tailor</i> .....	"Katharine and Petruchio."
<i>Strale</i> .....	"Checkmate."
<i>Sylvius</i> .....	"As You Like It."

### (T)

<i>Terry Dennison</i> .....	"Hearts of Oak."
<i>The Destroyer</i> .....	"The Haunted Man."
<i>Tim Bolus</i> .....	"My Turn Next."
<i>Timothy Tubbs</i> .....	"The Millionaire's Daughter."
<i>Tony Lumpkin</i> .....	"She Stoops to Conquer."
<i>Topsy</i> .....	"Uncle Tom's Cabin."
<i>Trip</i> .....	"The School for Scandal."
<i>Tubal</i> .....	"The Merchant of Venice."





**DAVID BELASCO AS FAGIN. IN "OLIVER TWIST"**

Photograph by Bradley & Rulofson, San Francisco.  
Original loaned by Mrs. David Belasco.



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DAVID BELASCO AS FAGIN, IN "OLIVER TWIST"

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Produced by Mrs. David Belasco











## THE LIFE OF DAVID BELASCO 147

### PART.

### PLAY.

(U)

*Uncle Tom*....."Uncle Tom's Cabin."

(V)

*Valentine*....."Faust" (Abridgment of).

*Vasquez* ..... "The Wonder."

(W)

*Waiter* ..... "The Gamester."

*Waiter (Negro)*....."Fritz in a Madhouse."

(Y)

*Young Marlowe*....."She Stoops to Conquer."

Other plays in which Belasco has performed,—as I have ascertained from newspaper advertisements or notices and from miscellaneous records, without, however, finding specification of the parts in them which he acted,—include "A Bull in a China Shop," "Damon and Pythias," "The French Spy," "A Hard Struggle," "The Lone Pine," "Mazeppa," "Medea," "Mimi," "Nobody's Child," "Pizarro," and "The Red Pocketbook." I have no doubt that he made unrecorded and now unremembered appearances in many other plays besides these.

To the catalogue previously given of readings and recitations frequently employed by Belasco should be added "Tell Me Not in Mournful Numbers," "The Maiden's Prayer," "Little Jim, the Collier's Lad," "Scenes from 'King Louis XI.," "Shamus O'Brien," "The Little Hero," "No One to Love Him," "The Trial Scene, from 'The Merchant of Venice,'" "Selections from 'Oliver Twist'" (the scene on London Bridge, scene wherein *Fagin* causes *Sikes* to murder *Nancy*, and *Fagin* awaiting execution), "The Country Bumpkin's Courtship," "Eliza," "The Dream of Eugene Aram," and "Jim Bludso,"



## BELASCO'S "THE STORY OF MY LIFE."

In making a critical examination of Belasco's "The Story of My Life,"—a document which, of course, it has been necessary for me to consult in writing this Memoir,—I have observed many misstatements of fact in it, due to defective memory or to haste and heedlessness in composition, and also the assertion of various erroneous notions and mistaken doctrines as to the art of acting, and as to the difference in the practice of that art between the customs of the present and the past. Turning to that "Story" in the expectation that it would prove helpful, I found only another specimen of the irresponsible writing which is deemed permissible relative to the Theatre, and viewing its formidable array of misstatements I have ruefully recalled the remark of Artemus Ward that "it is better not to know so many things than to know so many things that ain't so." Some of its errors I have specified and rectified, in other places, in the course of this narrative. Others of its errors and some of its errant notions and doctrines require passing reference here.

Belasco records that he early observed and condemned "the incongruity between the stage way of doing things and the way of life itself,"—the



implication being that, in acting, actual life should be literally copied. That is an error. There always is, and from the nature of things always will be, a certain incongruity between actual life and an artistic transcript of it. A literal copy of actual life shown on the stage does not usually cause the effect of actual life: it causes the effect of prolixity and tediousness. Belasco lays much stress on his early and sedulous practice of making himself acquainted, by observation, with all sorts of grewsome facts, assuring his readers that he visited lunatic asylums in order to study madness; talked with condemned murderers immediately prior to their execution and later witnessed the hanging of them; observed the effects of surgical operations performed in hospitals; contemplated deaths occurring there as the result of violence elsewhere; obtained from a friendly, communicative physician knowledge of the manner of death which ensues from the action of several sorts of poison, and was favored, in a dissecting room, with a view of a human heart which had just been extracted from a corpse,—his purpose in this line of inquiry having been to ascertain the multifarious manners in which persons suffer and die, and thus to qualify himself, as actor and stage manager, to imitate them himself or instruct others in the imitation of them. His notion, obviously,



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is that the actor ought to be acquainted with these things, and, when depicting death, should correctly and literally simulate the particular variety of the throes of dissolution which is appropriate as a climax to the mortal ailment or lethal stroke that destroys him.

All this is well enough in its way, but it is only a little part of the knowledge required by the actor, and a special objection to Belasco's way of introducing it is the implication that such minute preparation was peculiar and original with him. The doctrine of "realism" is often oppugnant to dramatic art, and an extreme adherence to it has been a primary cause of whatever is defective in Belasco's dramatic work. "Surely," he exclaims, "people do not die as quietly as they do upon the stage." It all depends on the "people" and the circumstances, whether on the stage or off. Death, in fact, sometimes comes so gently that its coming is not perceived. On the other hand, "people" do not always die quietly on the stage. Edwin Forrest, as the dying *Hamlet*, made a prodigious pother in his expiration and was a long time about it, and he maintained that a man of his size and massive physique could not die from poison without manifestation of extreme agony. I many times saw that muscular *Hamlet* die, and the spectacle, while





*From an old photograph.*

*Author's Collection.*

**HENRY J. MONTAGUE**  
(1844-1878)







it might have been correct (since the nature of the poison which kills *Hamlet* is unknown the question is wholly assumptive), was never affecting. I recollect the death of *Camille*, when that pulmonary courtesan was impersonated by Matilda Heron: it was protracted, vulgar, obnoxious, merely distressful, not the least pathetic, whereas the death of *Camille* when Modjeska played the part or when Sarah Bernhardt played it was attended by no spasms, no convulsions, no gurgitations, was almost instantaneous, and was inexpressibly touching.

Belasco is not the only actor, by many, who has studied madness in lunatic asylums, or observed the phenomena of death in hospitals, or sounded the depths of human depravity in slums and bagnios, or looked at human nature and human life through a microscope. The biographies of Garrick, Kemble, Cooke, Kean, Macready, Forrest, and Booth, for example, teem with evidence to the contrary. It is indisputably necessary that the authentic actor should *know*, but it is equally essential that when he comes to practise his art he should possess the *judgment to select* and the *skill to use* his selected knowledge in such a way as to accomplish his purpose—not mar or defeat it.



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Another of Belasco's completely mistaken and indeed comically errant notions is set forth in the following paragraph from his "Story":

"Coming to New York as a stranger, I knew I had a task before me *to introduce the new style* of acting which I felt was destined to take the place of the melodramatic method. . . . For a long time I had promised myself to give the public *a new style of acting and playwriting, all my own*. . . . New York audiences had been trained in *a school of exaggerated stage declamation, accompanied by a stage strut, and large, classic, sweeping gestures*, so, when *I introduced the quiet acting*, we were laughed to scorn, and the papers criticised our 'milk and water' methods. *It was all new*, and those who saw went away stunned and puzzled. We were considered extremists at the Madison Square Theatre, but we persisted, with the result that *our method* prevails to-day." [The italics are mine.—W. W.]

It is difficult to understand how such emanations of error could have proceeded from the pen of such an experienced actor, manager, dramatist, and observer as David Belasco, and it is even more difficult to be patient with them. New York audiences before his time had never been "trained in a school of exaggeration," and there was nothing in the least new,—unless, perhaps, it were Sunday-school tameness,—in the style of acting that was exhibited in the Madison Square Theatre. Long before Belasco's advent the New York audience had



seen, enjoyed, admired, and accepted Edwin Booth as *Hamlet* and *Richelieu*, Lester Wallack as *de Vigny* and as *Don Felix*, Gilbert as *Old Dornton*, Blake as *Jesse Rural*, Chippindale as *Grandfather Whitehead*, Henry Placide as *Lord Ogleby*, Coudock as *Luke Fielding*, Jefferson as *Rip Van Winkle*, Salvini as *Conrad* and *Sullivan*, Owens as *Caleb Plummer*, Walcot as *Touchstone*, Emery as *Bob Tyke*, Davenport as *St. Marc*, Elizabeth Jefferson (Mrs. Richardson) as *Pauline*, Agnes Robertson as *Jeanie Deans*, Mrs. Hoey as *Lady Teazle*, Laura Keane as *Marco* and as *Peg Woffington*, Julia Bennett (Mrs. Barrow) as *Hypolita* and *Cicely Home-spun*, Mrs. Vernon as *Lady Franklin*, Mary Carr as *Temperance*, and Mary Gannon as *Prue*,—all of whom (and many more might be mentioned) were conspicuously representative of the most refined, delicate, “natural,” “quiet” style of acting that has been known anywhere. That the New York audience had seen “barnstormers” and “soap-chewers” is true—but the educated, intelligent part of it had laughed at them before Belasco’s time just as heartily as it has since. I recollect evenings of frolic, many years ago, when I repaired, with gay comrades, to the old Bowery Theatre, with no other intent than to be merry over the proceedings of posers and spouters, of the *Crummles* and *Bing-*



ley variety, who were sometimes to be found there. That tribe has always existed. Cicero derided it, in old Rome. In Shakespeare's "Hamlet," written more than three hundred years ago, the *Prince* condemns the "robustious, periwig-pated fellow," who tears "a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings," and utters his well-known, wise counsel to actors that they should "acquire and beget a temperance" that may give "smoothness" to their expression of even the most tempestuous passion. The movement toward artistic acting has always, apparently, been going on. Every student of theatrical history has read about the elocutionary improvement effected by David Garrick, in 1741. It is a matter of common knowledge that Macready was famous for the great excellence of his "quiet acting," his wonderful use of facial expression, while never speaking a word. Edmund Kean, it has been authentically recorded, moved his audience to tears, merely by his *aspect*, while, as the *Stranger*, he sat gazing into vacancy, listening to the song,—sung for him, when he acted in this country, by Jefferson's mother:

"I have a silent sorrow here,  
A grief I'll ne'er impart,  
It breathes no sigh, it sheds no tear,  
But it consumes my heart."



I have seen many an audience in tears when the elder Hackett acted *Monsieur Mallet* and when Jefferson, as poor old *Rip*, murmured the forlorn question, "Are we so soon forgot when we are gone?" No modern manager has invented "natural,"—by which I mean *artistic*,—acting. Belasco did not invent it, nor did he introduce it at the Madison Square Theatre. He was affected by what he saw around him in acting, precisely as he was affected by what he saw around him in playwriting: like other workers in the Theatre, he sought to better his instruction, and he has contributed to the development of changes (not all of them beneficial) in the Theatre. At the Madison Square, both as stage manager and dramatist, he dissipated the insipidity with which a deference to clerical management was blighting the prospects of a capital company at that house, so that from the moment he joined it its fortunes began to improve.

#### THE EVIL OF INCOMPETENT CRITICISM.

It is one of the hardships under which actors are compelled to pursue their vocation that the Theatre and its votaries are continually subject to the idle comment, indiscriminate praise, and capricious censure of many incompetent writers in



the press. A few capable, well-equipped, earnest, and thoughtful critics unquestionably there are, in various parts of the Republic, but every little publication in the country parades its dramatic "critic," and most of those scribblers show themselves ignorant alike of dramatic literature, dramatic art, the history of the Stage, human nature, and human life. That statement is proved every day of the year, and it is folly to ascribe it to the discontent of age or to lack of sympathy with contemporary life. Any intelligent, educated person can put it to the test as often as desired. The newspapers, as a rule, do not wish dramatic criticism: theatrical managers, almost without exception, resent it and oppose it: the newspapers receive paid advertisements and the theatrical advertisers assume to be entitled to forbearance and to puffery in the "critical" columns. This is not true of all newspapers, but it is generally true, and the writers, whether competent or not, can bear testimony to its truth. I know of nothing more dreary than the pages of drivel about the drama which periodically make their appearance in many newspapers and magazines. A favorite topic of those commentators is the immense superiority of the plays and the acting of To-day over the plays and the acting that pleased our forefathers. There was, it appears, nothing good



in the Past: there is nothing but good in the Present. The old actors were artificial "pumps," stagey, declamatory, "spouters." Shakespeare is archaic. Old Comedy is a bore. The plays of Molière and Sheridan creak on their hinges. The plays of twenty, fifteen, ten years ago have "aged"! "Progress" has become of such celerity that the dramas of yesterday are "out of date"—before the second season begins! The principles of art have altered, and they alter afresh with the startling discoveries of each new batch of collegiate criticasters. Human nature has changed. The forces of the universe are different. The sun rises in the west and water runs uphill. Acting now is smooth, flexible, natural, fluent. Behold, we have made a new theatrical Heaven and Earth wherein dwelleth a NEW STYLE! It is lamentable that these ignorant, frivolous babblers of folly should be able to cite even one word from such an authority as David Belasco in support of their ridiculous pretensions: it is the more deplorable since, if he were brought to a serious consideration of his heedless assertions, he would certainly recant them. I am not able to believe, for example, that he would stigmatize Edwin Booth as a strutting exponent of exaggerated declamation,—an actor who could speak blank verse as if it were the language of nature, and always did so:



an actor and manager, moreover, who did more than any other one person of the Theatre to make possible the career of many who followed him, including David Belasco. Nor can I believe that he would call Florence a spouter,—Florence, who was one of the most adroit and delicate of artists,—or deride such performances as John Nickinson's *Haversack*, Blake's *Geoffrey Dale*, and Burton's *Cap'n Cuttle* as specimens of flannel-mouthed melodramatic rant. Yet such were the actors to whose style the New York audience had been accustomed long before the time when Belasco declares that he brought an entirely new and improved style of acting to the Madison Square Theatre and thus,—by implication at least,—asserts that he reformed the Stage.

Augustin Daly, who began theatrical management in New York, in 1869, when Belasco was a school-boy of sixteen, in San Francisco, constrained the actors whom he employed to respect and emulate the best traditions of acting, and, while he never sought to establish a school of acting, insisted on *Hamlet's* right doctrine of "temperance" and "smoothness"; and when he carried his dramatic company to San Francisco, in 1875, at which time Belasco saw and studied performances that were there given by it, "The Evening Bulletin," of that



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city, displeased by the delicate, refined, "*quiet*" acting which had charmed New York, thus testified:

"The Fifth Avenue Theatre Company have a style of their own. It is emasculated of vigor, force in action, and anything like declamation in reading. It is *quiet*, *elegant*, *languid*; making its points with a French shrug of the shoulders, little graceful gestures, and rapid play of features. The voice is soft, the tone low, and the manner at once subdued and expressive. It pleases a certain set of fashionables, but to the general public it is acting with the art of acting left out."

### THE NATURE OF BELASCO'S TALENTS AND SERVICES.

There has always been a desire and endeavor to act truly, and, side by side with that desire and endeavor, there has always been abuse of the art by incompetents and vulgarians. If you were to attend rehearsals at some of our theatres now, you would behold coarse and blatant bullies, of the *Mr. Dolphin* order, blaring at the actors "More ginger!" It is the way of that tribe and the custom in those temples of intellect. But while Belasco has not invented any new style of acting he has done great service to the Stage, and his name is written imperishably on the scroll of theatrical achievement in America. As an actor his experi-



ence has been ample and widely diversified. He possesses a complete mastery of the technicalities of histrionic art. As a stage manager he is competent in every particular and has no equal in this country to-day. His judgment, taste, and expert skill in creating appropriate environment, background, and atmosphere for a play and the actors in it are marvellous. His attention to detail is scrupulous; and his decision is prompt and usually unerring. No theatrical director within my observation,—which has been vigilant and has extended over many years,—has surpassed him in the exercise of that genius which consists in the resolute, tireless capability of taking infinite pains. Many of the performances which have been given under his direction are worthy to be remembered as examples of almost perfect histrionic art. As a dramatist he is essentially the product of that old style of writing which produced "Venice Preserved," "Fazio," "The Apostate," "The Clandestine Marriage," "The Jealous Wife," etc.,—a style with which his mind was early and completely saturated,—and of the example and influence of Dion Boucicault, whose expertness in construction, felicity in fashioning crisp dialogue, and exceptional skill in creating vivid dramatic effect he has always much and rightly admired. He has written many





Photograph by Sarony.

Author's Collection.

AUGUSTIN DALY, ABOUT 1870-'75







plays and he has co-labored with other authors in the writing of many more. He has exerted a powerful influence upon the Stage in every part of our country. He has battled successfully against the iniquitous Theatrical Trust and in a great measure contributed to the curtailment of its oppressive power. He has developed and made efficient several stars who, without his assistance, would never have gained the prominence which, with it, they have attained. He has established and now (1917) maintains one of the finest theatres in the world. To have done all this,—to have raised himself from indigence and obscurity to honorable distinction and actual leadership in an intellectual calling, to have made his way by force of character, native talent, indomitable resolution, patient, continuous, indefatigable labor; to have borne, with unshaken fortitude, hardships, trials, disappointment, enmity, and calumny, and to have risen above all the vicissitudes of fortune,—this surely is to have shown the steadfast man of the old Roman poet and to have merited the reward of prosperity and the laurel of fame. His eminence in his vocation, accordingly, and the obligation to him of the Theatre and the Public do not require the claim of imaginary achievements to enhance his reputation. There never was any need that he should have claimed that he



had introduced a new style of acting. I do not doubt, judging from what I have read of his many impersonations, that Betterton, who performed on the London stage more than two hundred years ago, could and did exemplify "quiet acting" as thoroughly as John Mason does, performing on the New York stage to-day. Changes, modifications of all kinds, have occurred, many varieties of personality have been exhibited, in many varieties of speech and bearing, but the radical, structural change in method that has been effected, the change from extravagance and elaborate artifice to refined simplicity, has not been wrought by any one person but by many persons, actuated by the same influences that have changed the physical investiture of the Theatre, and by the advance of intelligence, sense, and taste. It is peculiarly deplorable that the authority of Belasco should even *seem* to sustain such carping critics as I have indicated (writers who, ignorant of theatrical history and, apparently, of much else, seek to exalt the Present by impudent disparagement of the Past), because many of that tribe have, recently, taken to publishing idle and stupid detraction of Belasco himself, on the ground that he is "unprogressive" and belongs to "the old fashion." He has done more by a single production such as "The Darling of the Gods" than the whole



swarm of his detractors has ever done, or ever will do, in a lifetime of scribbling, and his name will live as a beacon of achievement, in life as well as in the Theatre, generations after they are all vanished and forgotten, like wind-blown dust.

CONCERNING MATTERS OF FACT.

Genest, in his exceedingly valuable "Account" of the Theatre in Great Britain,—a work to which every later writer on the subject finds himself more or less indebted and which ought to be reprinted,—sagely remarks that "In giving an account of the Stage a good story may sometimes be admitted on slender authority, but where mere matters of fact are concerned the history of the Stage ought to be written with the same accuracy as the history of England." The attainment of accuracy, however, exacts scrupulous attention, ceaseless vigilance, patient inquiry, and hard work, and only a few writers about the Stage have ever taken the trouble to be thorough and exact. I had expected that Belasco's "Story" could be depended upon in every particular and that it would prove of invaluable aid in writing this Memoir. I do not doubt that he designed it to be literally true, but, as a conscientious biographer, I am compelled to



mention its errors of fact, and I deem it my duty to specify and correct some of them, as an act of justice alike to him and to his, and my, readers.

Belasco, as I have ascertained and stated, was born not in 1858 or 1859, as various accounts of him have declared, but in 1853. He has himself affirmed that in 1865, in San Francisco, he walked in a funeral procession expressive of the public grief for the death of Abraham Lincoln and at that time wrote a play, on the tragic and pathetic fate of that illustrious American, expositive of his views of the motives of Lincoln's murderer. If we were to accredit the dates which are given as authentic in various published sketches of his life,—which appear to have been formally sanctioned,—we should find him to have reached only to the age of five years and nine months when he walked in that procession and wrote that play; we should find him,—according to such wild statements,—when he acted, in Victoria, with Julia Dean and Charles Kean, performing with those distinguished players about three years after both of them had died; we should admire him when, before the age of eleven, he was critically estimating the histrionic style of Walter Montgomery; and when, between the ages of thirteen and fourteen, he was giving counsel,



which Raymond the comedian had solicited, relative to the play of "The Gilded Age," and also as acting as amanuensis to Dion Boucicault. He states that Lawrence Barrett loved John McCullough "like his son." Barrett, born in 1838, was six years younger than McCullough, born in 1832, and he could not have viewed that stalwart comrade with anything like a paternal—or a filial—feeling. In fact, though they dwelt in amicable association as managers and actors (it would have been hard for anybody to dwell in association with McCullough in any other way), there was no special affection between them, as I personally know. Belasco's statement that McCullough was at one time Forrest's dresser is incorrect. He admired Forrest and he imitated him (until the veteran gruffly told him to leave off "making a damned fool" of himself by so doing), but he never was Forrest's servant or lackey. Belasco says that Barrett's first appearance as *Cassius*, in "Julius Cæsar," was made in 1870, in San Francisco, and that he "hated" the part and wished to play *Antony*, but could not because it was Walter Montgomery's part,—the fact being that he played *Cassius* for the first time about 1855, when he was about seventeen years old, at the Metropolitan Theatre, Detroit; that he *loved* the part; that his affinity with it was very strong, and that he esteemed



it, as what indeed it is, the moving impulse of the whole tragedy. Barrett first played *Cassius* in San Francisco March 9, 1869, at the California Theatre, Edwards acting *Antony*; that is, about one year before Montgomery visited San Francisco. I have talked with Barrett for hours and hours about acting, and especially about the play of "Julius Cæsar," but I never heard him speak with enthusiasm about the part of *Marc Antony*, or express any desire to act that part, though he thoroughly understood it and knew its value. Another of Belasco's mistaken assertions is the assurance that Walter Montgomery,—who acted *Antony* with Barrett as *Cassius* and McCullough as *Brutus*,—was enamoured of an actress named Rose Massey; that he (Belasco) witnessed their first encounter, on the stage of the California Theatre, when Montgomery was smitten speechless at the sight of the young woman; that he soon married her; and that, after a quarrel with her, he committed suicide, aboard a ship bound for England. Inquiry would have corrected his memory. Poor Montgomery (a genial fellow and a fine actor) was easily and often enamoured: as was said of the poet Heine, "His heart was a good deal broken in the course of his life." Rose Massey was an ordinarily pretty woman, one of the many devotees of the Blonde Troupe



**LAWRENCE BARRETT AS CAIUS CASSIUS.  
IN "JULIUS CAESAR"**

*"If we do meet again, we'll smile indeed;  
If not, 'tis true this parting was well made!"*

**—Act V. sc. 1**



LAWRENCE BARRETT AS CAIUS CAESAR.  
"IN JULIUS CAESAR."

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manager, Alexander Henderson, and I remember her as a female at whom it was easily possible to gaze without blinking. Montgomery never married her. Walter Montgomery (Richard Tomlinson, 1827-1871: Montgomery was his mother's name) married an actress called Winnetta Montague. Her real name was Laleah Burpré Bigelow. She had been the wife of a Boston gentleman, Arnold W. Taylor. Montgomery met her on the stage at the Boston Theatre. She was attracted by him, followed him to England, and captured him. Their marriage occurred on August 30, 1871, and on September 2, in a lodging in Stafford Street, Bond Street, London, he committed suicide, by shooting, and he was buried in Brompton Cemetery. Winnetta Montague returned to America, resumed acting, allied herself with an Irish comedian named James M. Ward, died in New York, in abject poverty, in 1877, and was buried by charitable members of the dramatic profession.

The excellent and famous personation of *Fagin* which was shown throughout our country by J. W. Wallack, the Younger, is ascribed by Belasco to "Lester's father," J. W. Wallack, the Elder, who was "Jim" Wallack's uncle, and by whom the part was never played. The movable stage introduced



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at the Madison Square Theatre in 1879 is designated "an innovation" invented by Steele Mackaye, whereas, in fact, it was a variant of the movable stage scheme introduced at Booth's Theatre, in 1869, by Edwin Booth.

"Looking over theatrical history," Belasco exclaims, "has it ever occurred to you how many players have based their fame *on just one rôle?*—Salvini as *Othello*, Irving as *Mathias*, in "The Bells"; Booth as *Hamlet*, Raymond as *Mulberry Sellers*, Sothorn as *Dundreary*, Emmet as *Fritz*, Jefferson as *Rip*, Mayo as *Davy Crockett*, Chanfrau as *Kit?* . . . Most of these men struggled a lifetime and gained recognition as creditable actors. Then, suddenly, they struck a particular part, a sort of entertainment, a combination of all the excellent things they had done throughout their lives but never before had concentrated on one rôle. And there you are! *Any other actor might have become just as famous if Fate had thrown the part first in his way.* I have seen three *Rips*,—that of Jefferson, that of Robert McWade, and finally that of James A. Herne. This last was a wonderful characterization, with all the softness and pathos of the part. I was a *Dwarf*, to Herne's *Rip*, in the Maguire's Opera House days. But *Fate* chose to thrust forward Jefferson as the only *Rip* that ever was or ever could be. *I happen to know better.* Jefferson was never the Dutchman; he was the Yankee personating the Dutchman. But James A. Herne's *Rip* was the real thing. . . . These actors of one part are like the favored children of heaven; they are handed something on a golden platter, *already created by the author.* It is *to the author, the director, the stage manager*, that the true credit of the



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creation belongs. Jefferson did not really create *Rip*; through a certain undeniable art of his *he* simply put into visible form what *Washington Irving* in the story suggested and Dion Boucicault so cleverly fitted to his personality for the stage; *he utilized every bit of the descriptive business of the tale.*"

Seldom has so much error and injustice been packed into so small a space! It is true that, in many instances, individual actors have abundantly prospered by the long-continued repetition of a single performance: this fact, I remember, was impatiently noticed many years ago by Don Piatt, who testily expressed in a Washington newspaper an ardent wish that old *Rip Van Winkle* and old *Fanchon* would get married and both retire. It is not because the individual actor *finds* "a particular part, a sort of entertainment, a combination of all the excellent things" he has done throughout his life, that he often becomes most famous in one part; it is because, in every art, the artist's range of *supreme* merit is, comparatively, narrow; no matter how well he can do fifty things, he can, as a rule, do one thing best of all,—that thing being always one for which, whether he happens to like it or not, he possesses a peculiar capacity, one with which he possesses a close artistic and physical affinity, so that, in the doing of it, he can make



an ampler and more effective display of his talents than he can make in any other way; and also because the public (with a generally sound instinctive preference for seeing an actor in the thing which he can do best) insists on seeing him in it and will not go in large numbers to see him in anything else.

How much judgment is there in a statement which classifies performances of *Othello*, *Mathias*, and *Hamlet* among "entertainments"? Salvini had played *nothing* like *Othello*, Irving *nothing* like *Mathias*, Booth *nothing* like *Hamlet* before, respectively, they played those parts. (Such performances as *Sellers*, *Fritz*, *Crockett*, and *Kit*, well enough in their way, do not deserve thoughtful consideration as the basis of histrionic "fame.") "*Any other* actor might have become *just as famous* if Fate had thrown the part first in *his way!*" That is, according to this careless commentator, although a "one-part actor" achieves his greatest success in a part which happens to combine "all the excellent things," the peculiar, individual merits, of *that special actor*, nevertheless *any other* actor could have achieved the same success if he had been fortunate enough to receive the golden opportunity first. Charles Harcourt played *Mathias*, under the name of *Paul Zegers*, at the Alfred Theatre (the old



Marylebone), London, in a version of "The Polish Jew" by Frank Burnand, several months before Irving ever played it—and Harcourt utterly failed in it. *Othello* and *Hamlet* had been played by scores of contemporary actors before Salvini and Booth, respectively, played those parts,—yet the effect produced by those actors in those parts was not the less unique and extraordinary. Irving's fame as an actor, moreover, rested and rests at least as much on his *Hamlet*, *Shylock*, *King Louis*, *Mephistopheles*, and *Benedick* as on his *Mathias*. *Hamlet* certainly was Booth's most typical performance, but also certainly he was more popular as *Richelieu* than as *Hamlet*, and his fame rests on that part and on his *Brutus*, *Shylock*, *King Richard the Third*, and *Iago* as much as on his *Hamlet*. Salvini's fame rests as much on his *Corado*, *Niger*, *King Saul*, and *Orosmane* as on his *Othello*—and in all of those parts he was finer than he was in *Othello*. Salvini, Irving, and Booth were not "one-part actors," nor does their fame rest on any one performance, nor should the credit for their achievement be given to any author, director, or stage manager—or to anybody but themselves. Booth, Irving, and Salvini were stage directors and managers, and though they did not write the parts which they acted, they certainly arranged them, and as to some of them they



supplied vital suggestions. The character of *Mathias*, in "The Bells," for instance, was completely reconstructed by Leopold Lewis, *at Irving's suggestion*, to adapt it to his mysterious personality and peculiarities of style. *Lord Dundreary*, when first given to Sothern by Laura Keene, was a wretched part, about seventeen lines in length,—“a dyed-up old man” she called it, asking him to accept it,—but the comedian eventually expanded it till it dominated the play, and it is fair to say that, *literally*, he “created” it.

#### THE FACTS ABOUT JEFFERSON'S *RIP*.

Jefferson was a youth when he was first attracted to the part of *Rip Van Winkle*. He had seen it played by his half-brother, Charles St. Thomas Burke, who was esteemed by his contemporaries a great comedian, and had acted in the play with him, as *Seth*. He has himself told me that long before he attained a position in which he could publicly assume it he frequently made up for it and rehearsed it in private. The play that he at first used was one Burke had made, which Jefferson tinkered and improved. There were at least ten plays on the subject in existence *before* Jefferson ever appeared as *Rip*, and eight recorded performers of that part.



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The first *Rip* was Thomas Flynn, the second was Charles B. Parsons; both of them acted it in 1828,—a year before Jefferson was born. Their successors were William B. Chapman, 1829; James Henry Hackett, 1830; Frederick Henry Yates, 1831; William Isherwood, 1833-'34; Joseph Jefferson, the second (our Jefferson's father), about 183(8?), and Charles Burke, 1849-'50, or earlier. Jefferson first acted *Rip* at Caruso's Hall, in Washington, in 1859, and he continued to act it for forty-five years. I first saw him in it, in the season of 1859-'60, at the Winter Garden Theatre, New York, and was deeply impressed by his performance, which almost ever since I have extolled in the press as one of the greatest pieces of acting that have been seen in our time. Down to 1865, Hackett, by birth a Hollander, was highly esteemed as *Rip*, but neither he nor either of the actors above mentioned was ever "just as famous" in it as Jefferson became, though "Fate" had thrown it in their way long before that deity had thrown it in his. His achievement has been more or less disparaged ever since he first won the public suffrage in it. His success has been ascribed to almost anything except the real cause,—for example, to Chance, to "Fate," to Dion Boucicault, and to me,—which is mere nonsense. Jefferson's wonderful artistic triumph as *Rip Van Winkle* was due



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to just one person—*himself*. He would have gained it if all the persons who have been credited with “making him” had never lived. His impersonation was entirely his own conception and construction—a work of pure genius. The play that Boucicault, in 1865, in London, made for him, on the basis of the old version which he had used for more than six years, was largely fashioned after suggestions *made by Jefferson himself*, the most important of which being that in the mysterious, supernatural midnight scene on the lonely mountain top the ghosts should remain silent and only the man should speak. Jefferson had the soul of a poet, the mind of a dreamer, the eye of a painter, the imagination and heart of a genius, and he was a consummate actor. As an executant in acting he operated with exquisite precision, and his art was infiltrated with light, geniality, and humor. “It is to the author, the director, the stage manager that the true credit of the creation belongs,” writes Belasco, himself an author, a director, and a stage manager, and therefore not an altogether impartial witness; forgetful, also, that Jefferson was experienced in all those callings. The author of a play provides *the soul* of a part, the actor provides *the body* and vitalizes it with all his being, and shapes and adorns it, *revealing* the soul, with all his art:



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“But by the mighty *actor* brought,  
Illusion’s *perfect* triumphs come,—  
Verse ceases to be airy thought,  
And Sculpture to be dumb!”

Jefferson used only the skeleton of the story of *Rip Van Winkle* as told by Washington Irving, in “The Sketch Book” (1819): the character, as he portrayed it, is quite different from the commonplace sot designated by Irving. As to Boucicault’s version of the play—that dramatist disparaged it, did not believe in it, and actually assured Jefferson, just before the curtain rose on its first performance (September 4, 1865, at the Adelphi Theatre, London), that it would *fail*; and after he had seen Jefferson’s performance he said to that comedian, “You are shooting over their heads,” to which Jefferson answered, “I am not even shooting *at* their heads—I am shooting *at their hearts*.” He hit them. Later, Boucicault discovered what Jefferson meant (he could see a church by daylight as well as another!), and paid him the compliment of devising for himself an Irish *Rip Van Winkle*, under the name of *Conn, the Shaughraun*, which he admirably acted, as nearly as he could, in Jefferson’s spirit and manner. “Jefferson,” writes Belasco, “was the *Yankee* personating the Dutchman.” Another mistake. “Yankee” is an epithet of disparagement which the British contemptuously



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applied to the rural inhabitants of New England in the time of the American Revolutionary War. Jefferson did not possess *any* of either the physical or mental qualities of a New Englander. He was of English, Scotch, and French lineage. His grandfather was a Yorkshire man; his father a Pennsylvanian; his mother a French lady (born in the Island of San Domingo); himself a native of Philadelphia—and no more a “Yankee” than J. A. Herne was, whose lineage was Irish, who was born at Cohoes, New York, and whose performance of *Rip* (a respectable one) was based in part on Jefferson and in part on Hackett. It is idle to disparage Jefferson as *Rip Van Winkle*. That impersonation will live in theatrical history when all the Hernes, McWades, etc., are lost in oblivion!

### A LEADING LADY IN A PET.

Prior to presentment of “The Millionaire’s Daughter” (May 19, 1879) at the Baldwin Theatre Maguire had made a contract requiring production there, on May 24 and 25, of a play entitled “Cupid’s Lawsuit”: the prosperous though not protracted career of Belasco’s melodrama was, accordingly, interrupted on those dates and resumed on the 26th; it ended on June 1. June 2 was signalized by the





**JOSEPH JEFFERSON AS *RIP VAN WINKLE***

**"Und see, I come back, und my vife is gon' und my home is gon'. My home is gon', und my chil'—my chil' look in my face und don' know who I am!"**

**—Act V.**



JOSEPH JEFFERSON AS RIP VAN WINKLE

"And see, I come back, and my life is gone, and my home is gone. My  
home is gone, and my child—my child, look in my face and you'll know  
who I am!"

- Act V.

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primary appearance in San Francisco, made at the Baldwin, of the dashing, sparkling actress Rose Coghlan, then in the flush of opulent beauty and the pride of bounteous success. Miss Coghlan came to the American Stage when she was a girl of twenty, performing at Wallack's Theatre, New York (the Thirteenth Street House), September 2, 1872, as *Mrs. Honeyton*, in "A Happy Pair," and in association with the Lydia Thompson Troupe, as *Jupiter*, in a revival of "Ixion; or, The Man at the Wheel." She played many parts during the ensuing seven years,—gaining a memorable triumph at Wallack's, September 21, 1878, as *Lady Teazle*, when "The School for Scandal" was revived there with a cast including John Gilbert as *Sir Peter*, John Brougham as *Sir Oliver*, Mme. Ponisi as *Mrs. Candor*, and Charles F. Coghlan as *Charles Surface*. Miss Coghlan's emergence on the California Stage was an event which inspired eager public interest. She had been engaged by Maguire (who paid her \$500 a week for her services, a large salary at any time and an immense one in those days) in compliance with the fervent importunity of Belasco, and the latter was somewhat disconcerted at finding her attitude toward him that of arrogant disdain. "Maguire brought her to the stage, for the first rehearsal," Belasco has said, describing to me their



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meeting: "and she took her stand near the stage manager's table, where I sat. I rose to greet her, but she looked *over* me, *past* me, and *through* me; then she turned to Maguire and asked if she might meet the stage manager. I was introduced to her, and at last she condescended to *see* me. 'What!' she exclaimed: 'this *boy* to be my director, after I have come from Wallack's! Never!' It was rather an embarrassing situation for me, but I had had too much experience of the ways of leading ladies to take offence. 'Is it possible,' she continued, 'that men like James O'Neill and Lewis Morrison act under the direction of a *boy*! For my part, I won't do it!'—and she turned toward where Maguire had been standing, only to find that he had slipped away,—delighted with my predicament,—leaving me to deal as best I could with the celebrated actress I had induced him to engage! 'Miss Coghlan,' I said, 'I trust you will find our stage competently managed; at any rate, we'll try to please you: for my part, I shall be most thankful for any suggestions you may be kind enough to favor me with, and you will not, I assure you, find me anxious to impose upon you any business that might conflict with your own conceptions.' With that, O'Neill and Morrison came in, together, and I introduced them and called the First Act. Before the rehearsal





Photograph by Saroni,  
Belasco's Collection.

### ROSE COGHILLAN

About 1879, when they first acted in San Francisco, under Belasco's direction



From an old photograph,  
The Albert Davis Collection.

### NINA VARIAN







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was over Miss Coghlan realized that, if I did look like a boy, I was not quite the tyro she had supposed me to be; we were soon good friends, and have always remained so."

### ROSE COGHLAN AND "THE MOONLIGHT MARRIAGE."

Rose Coghlan began her season at the Baldwin as *Lady Gay Spanker*, in "London Assurance," with Nina Varian,—who, also, then made her first appearance in San Francisco,—as *Grace Harkaway*, O'Neill as *Dazzle*, and Morrison as *Charles Courtly*. During the four weeks that followed Miss Coghlan was also seen in "The School for Scandal," "A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing" and "A Scrap of Paper" (a double bill), a revival of "The Danicheffs," and "Seraphine; or, The Mother's Secret." On June 30 occurred the "first production of the powerful romantic play in five tableaux, by D. Belasco and James A. Herne," entitled "The Marriage by Moonlight": the performance on the opening night was given for the benefit of Company B, First Infantry, N. G. C. This play was specially prepared for Miss Coghlan: it was based on Watts Phillips' "Camilla's Husband,"—which was originally acted at the Royal Olympic Theatre, London, November 10, 1862. The Belasco and Herne alteration of it was thus cast at the Baldwin;



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<i>Lorraine</i> .....	James O'Neill.
<i>Felix</i> .....	Forrest M. Robinson.
<i>Harold</i> .....	Lewis Morrison.
<i>Lord Pippin</i> .....	John N. Long.
<i>Peeping Tom</i> .....	James A. Herne.
<i>Clarisse</i> .....	Rose Coghlan.
<i>Hazel</i> .....	Katherine Corcoran.
<i>Lady Challoner</i> .....	Kate Denin.
<i>Lady Aurelia</i> .....	Blanche Thorne.
<i>Elise</i> .....	Mollie Revel.

On June 16 Lester Wallack, acting *Hugh Chalcotte*, in "Ours," began, at the California Theatre, his only engagement in San Francisco. Miss Coghlan (who was to appear as a member of his theatrical company during the season of 1879-1880) apprised him of the merits of "The Marriage by Moonlight" (or "The Moonlight Marriage," as, finally, it was denominated), and, after witnessing a performance of that play, Wallack expressed a desire to purchase it for representation at his New York theatre, with Miss Coghlan in the central character. Herne, however, had conceived a tentative plan of making this play the vehicle for a co-starring venture, in the East, by his wife and himself, and Wallack's proposal was declined. Herne entertained an overweening, if natural, estimate of his wife's histrionic abilities. Belasco, in his "Story," referring to Augustin Daly's



well-known play of "Divorce," gives this sketch of their early acquaintance:

"The manuscript arrived, but we had no one to play the woman's part, when a young girl came into the theatre and asked to see Mr. Herne. Her name was Katherine Corcoran. When she was ushered in we saw at a glance that we had found the heroine of 'Divorce.' It required a *petite* woman, full of fascination, charm, intensity, and with the power to weep. Of course, we did not know her capacities, but she seemed full of promise. She was engaged at once. When the time came for rehearsals she went quietly through them,—an alien not particularly welcome to the company. 'Who is she?' they all asked, and the leading man came to Herne and myself, and laid before us the numerous complaints he was receiving. As it was very obvious that Herne was in love with her, and so likely to be prejudiced, Maguire turned to me. 'She is going to make a sensation,' I said; 'I'll stake my life on it.' And she did, becoming one of the big elements in our support and quite winning the players. It was not long before she and Herne were married. . . . No one ever owed more to a woman than he to little 'K. C.'"

This recollection must refer not to the first San Francisco production of "Divorce" (as Belasco says it does) but to a revival of that play. Miss Corcoran was a pupil of Miss Julia Melville as late as 1877; she gained her first experience as an actress in a stock company at Portland, Oregon, and she joined the company at the Baldwin Theatre, about September-October, 1877. She was married to



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Herne in April, 1878. The first presentment of "Divorce" in San Francisco occurred at Maguire's New Theatre, August 31, 1874. The purpose of attempting to make Miss Corcoran a star in Miss Coghlan's part in "The Moonlight Marriage" and the consequent rejection of Wallack's offer were injudicious in themselves and certainly disadvantageous to Belasco: had that offer been accepted, he might have been established in New York much sooner than he was.—The manuscript of "The Moonlight Marriage" was ultimately consumed in a fire which destroyed the Herne home, called Herne Oaks, at Southampton, Long Island, New York, December 11, 1909.

After four performances of "The Moonlight Marriage" had been given at the Baldwin it was suspended, in order to permit J. C. Williamson and his wife, "Maggie" Moore, to fulfil an engagement there,—which they did, presenting "Struck Oil" and "The Chinese Question" July 4 and (afternoon as well as night) 5. The Belasco and Herne drama was restored to the stage July 6 and ran till the 12th. On Sunday night, the 13th, a performance was given at the Baldwin, "for the benefit of Belasco and Herne,"—both "The Moonlight Marriage" and "Rip Van Winkle" being compressed into the entertainment.



"L'ASSOMMOIR" AND A DOUBLE-BARRELLED BENEFIT.

The state of theatrical affairs in San Francisco had been for a considerable time prior to midsummer, 1879, steadily declining, and conditions at the Baldwin had become equivocal and perplexing. E. J. Baldwin was actively at variance with Maguire, whose formal lease of the theatre had expired on the preceding July 1, and the house was being conducted, in "a hand to mouth" way, under some dubious arrangement of expediency between Maguire and Charles L. Gardner. Heavy debts had been contracted and credit had been exhausted. "That 'benefit,'" Belasco has declared to me, "was urgently needed! Maguire was, among other things, an inveterate gambler and would often stake every dollar the treasury contained. Then, if luck went against him, he'd come and tell us salaries could not be paid, because he had lost! The salaries *were* paid,—out of 'Lucky' Baldwin's pocket. But he had grown tired of backing a losing game and, besides, he and Maguire had had some special row,—I don't now remember what it was about,—and Baldwin had withdrawn his support. Expenses were very high: Miss Coghlan's engagement had 'run on' and her \$500 a week was a heavy drag: Herne and I had an interest, and we simply had to have some ready money to



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keep us going,—so I suggested a double-barrelled ‘benefit’ as a way of getting it.”

A particular reason for solicitude when this Belasco-Herne “benefit” was projected was urgent desire to insure Rose Coghlan’s appearance—which had been advertised—as *Gervaise*, in a play called “L’Assommoir.” Émile Zola’s noxious novel of that name was published, in Paris, in 1878, and a stage synopsis of it, made by W. Bushnach and — Gastineau, was produced, January 18, 1879, at the Théâtre Ambigu-Comique. It is interesting to note that Augustin Daly, who chanced to be in the French capital soon afterward, witnessed a performance of it and, in a letter written to his brother, the late Joseph Francis Daly, under date of January 30, described it in these words:

“‘L’Assommoir’ is a disgusting piece,—one prolonged sigh, from first to last, over the miseries of the poor, with a dialogue culled from the lowest slang and tritest clap-trap. It gave me no points that I could use, and the only novelty in it was in the *lavoir* scene, where two wash-women (the heroine and her rival) throw pails of warm water (actually) over each other and stand dripping before the audience.”

Notwithstanding his correctly adverse opinion of “L’Assommoir” Daly was induced, in deference to the wish of his father-in-law, John Duff, to buy the



American copyright of the work (for which he paid £200, furnished by Duff), and to make a version of it, considerably denaturized,—in five acts, containing twelve tableaux,—which he produced at the Olympic Theatre, New York, April 30, 1879. It was a complete failure. (The only memorable incident associated with that production is that in it, as *Big Clémence*, Ada Rehan, the supreme comedy actress of her day, made her first appearance under the management of Daly.) On June 2 an adaptation of the French play, made by Charles Reade, was brought out at the Princess' Theatre, London,—which, because of the extraordinarily effective acting in it of Charles Warner (1847-1909), as *Coupeau*, achieved immediate and, unhappily, enduring success. Maguire, reading in a newspaper dispatch of that London success, undeterred by Daly's New York failure (perhaps stimulated by it), had at once asked Belasco to make a play on the subject for the Baldwin Theatre. This, as soon as "The Moonlight Marriage" was launched, Belasco had done,—basing his drama on an English translation of Zola's book and completing his work within one week. All concerned were hopeful that this new drama of violent sensation would please the popular taste and serve to set the Baldwin once more in the path of prosperity. It was presented at that theatre July 15, 1879, and



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it was sufficiently successful to gain and hold public interest for two weeks,—a result due in part to the excellent acting with which it was illustrated, in part to the dexterity of Belasco's exacting stage management. A single comparative incident is significantly suggestive: in Daly's New York production the fall of *Coupeau* from a ladder was, palpably, made by substituting a dummy figure for the actor who played the part: in Belasco's San Francisco presentment the fall of *Coupeau* was so skilfully managed that, on the opening night, it was for several moments supposed by the audience that an actual accident had occurred. This was the cast:

<i>Coupeau</i> .....	James O'Neill.
<i>Lantier</i> .....	Lewis Morrison.
<i>Mes Bottes</i> .....	C. B. Bishop.
<i>Bibi-La-Grillade</i> .....	James A. Herne.
<i>Bec-Sali</i> .....	John N. Long.
<i>Pere Bazonge</i> .....	John W. Jennings.
<i>Goujet</i> .....	Forrest Robinson.
<i>Gervaise</i> .....	Rose Coghlan.
<i>Big Virginie</i> .....	Lillian Andrews.
<i>Mme. Boche</i> .....	Jean Clara Walters.
<i>Mme. Lorieleaux</i> .....	Mollie Revel.
<i>Nana</i> .....	Katherine Corcoran.
<i>Clémence</i> .....	Blanche Thorn.



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### A HOT WATER REHEARSAL

Talking with me about this play, Belasco remarked: "We had a lively time getting that piece licked into shape and produced. The cast was, practically, an 'all star' one (far finer, I know, than I could get together to-day), several of the members having been specially engaged, and it took a good deal of diplomacy to keep things tranquil and everybody contented. I remember I had an even more disagreeable passage with Lillian Andrews (who had been brought in to play *Big Virginie*) than that at my first meeting with Miss Coghlan. The Washhouse Scene was a hard one—you couldn't fool with it; the only way to make it go was to *do* it!—and at the dress rehearsal Miss Andrews refused point-blank to go through it as it was to be done at night. Both she and Miss Coghlan were under dressed with close-fitting rubber suits to keep them dry; but, even so, it was no fun to be drenched with hot soapy water, and I was sorry for them. But, of course, the scene had to be properly and fully rehearsed, and the upshot was I had to tell Miss Andrews she must do her business as directed or leave the company. And, after a grand row, we had the scene as it was to be at night. She and Coghlan and everybody concerned were in such tempers by the time I finished



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reading the riot act that everything was marvellously realistic; I doubt whether it was ever quite so well done at a public performance!"

Belasco's "L'Assommoir" ran until July 30, when Miss Coghlan ended her season in San Francisco. On the 31st Steele Mackaye's "Won at Last" was first performed at the Baldwin; and, on August 11, came little Lotta, in "Musette," "La Cigale," and other plays, her engagement extending to September 6.

### THE PLAY OF "CHUMS."

While thus employed at the Baldwin Theatre,—that is, at some time between May and August, 1879,—Belasco was asked by James O'Neill to write a play for his use and that of Lewis Morrison (1844-1906), his intimate friend, and he had begun the adaptation of an old drama, which he purposed to entitle "Chums." His original intention was that this should be produced with O'Neill and Morrison in the chief parts (those actors being desirous of leaving the Baldwin Theatre stock company and establishing themselves, under a joint business management, as co-stars); but he had made no contract nor even mentioned his project, and when, later, his adapted play, then incomplete, by chance became





Photograph by Taber, San Francisco.  
Courtesy Mrs. Morrison.

**LEWIS MORRISON**

About 1890



Photograph by Saroni.  
Belasco's Collection.

**JAMES O'NEILL**







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known to Mr. and Mrs. Herne, with whom he was closely associated, he acceded to a proposal which they made to form a partnership with them for its production. Herne, who had first appeared in California in 1868, was then well established in popular favor; moreover,—notwithstanding that most of the actual labor of stage management devolved on Belasco,—authoritative control of the Baldwin stage and, to a great extent, selection of the plays to be represented at that theatre were vested in Herne. His coöperation, therefore, was desirable, if, indeed, it was not essential; he became a co-worker with Belasco, and between them the play was finished. During the engagement of Lotta Herne arranged for a tour of Pacific Slope towns by O'Neill and Morrison, leading the Baldwin Dramatic Company, beginning at Sacramento, Sunday, September 7, in a repertory which comprised "Diplomacy," "A Woman of the People," "Pink Dominos," "Won at Last," "L'Assommoir," and "Within an Inch of His Life," thus leaving the way clear for rehearsal and production of "Chums." Belasco and the Hernes were expectant of great success for this play. Handsome scenery had been painted for it, and ample provision had been made for the display of those accessories which please the public taste for what is known as "realism." The prospect seemed bright.



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The first performance occurred on September 9, 1879, at the Baldwin Theatre, Katharine Corcoran (Mrs. Herne) taking a benefit. The result was a bitter disappointment. The receipts were extremely small ("I remember," writes Belasco, "that, one night, they were only \$17.50!"), and after a disheartening run of two weeks "Chums" was withdrawn,—being succeeded by O'Neill and Morrison, in a revival of "Won at Last." This was the San Francisco cast of "Chums":

<i>Terry Dennison</i>	} The Chums.....	James A. Herne.
<i>Ruby Darrell</i>		W. H. Haverstraw.
<i>Uncle Davy</i> .....		J. W. Jennings.
<i>Owen Garroway</i> .....		Charles B. Bishop.
<i>Mr. Ellingham</i> .....		A. D. Bradley.
<i>Foreman of the Mill</i> .....		H. Thompson.
<i>Clerk of the Mill</i> .....		Mr. Pierce.
<i>Mr. Parker</i> .....		E. Ambrose.
<i>Tom</i> .....		J. W. Thompson.
<i>Sleuth</i> .....		L. Paul.
<i>Chrystal</i> .....		Katherine Corcoran.
<i>Aunt Betsy</i> .....		Annie A. Adams.
<i>Little Chrystal</i> .....		Maude Adams.
<i>The Baby</i> .....		Herself.

By this decisive failure Herne was much discouraged. Not so either Belasco or Mrs. Herne, and on a suggestion made by the latter it was determined



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to take the play on a tour into the East. "I took a benefit at the Baldwin," Belasco told me, "and it *was* a benefit! Everybody volunteered; Maguire [the manager of the Baldwin] gave us the use of the theatre; the actors gave their services; the orchestra gave theirs; the newspapers gave the 'ads.' All that came in was clear gain, and I got a little more than \$3,000. That was our working capital."

### FROM SAN FRANCISCO TO CHICAGO.

With money thus raised on Belasco's behalf, and with a play projected by him, the business alliance was arranged,—the Hernes to have one-half interest and Belasco the other. A company was engaged and the expedition was undertaken,—the design being to act "Chums" in various cities on the way to the Atlantic Seaboard, with hope of securing an opening in New York and making a fortune. Ill luck, however, attended it. "Chums" was played in Salt Lake City and other places, but everywhere in vain. At last, the scenery having been seized for debt, the company was disbanded and the partners, almost penniless, made their way to Chicago. The chief managers in that city then were James Horace McVicker (1822-1896) and Richard Martin Hooley (1822-1898). Both were



besought to produce "Chums" and both declined. "We were in a dreadful way," said Belasco, in telling me this story; "we had gone to the old Sherman House and taken the smallest, cheapest rooms we could get, and Alvin Hurlbert, the proprietor, had let our bills run. But at last they had run so long we had to make an explanation,—and I did the explaining. It wasn't an easy thing to do,—though I'd done it before, in the early, wild days in the West. But Hurlbert was very kind: 'I believe in you, my boy,' he said, 'and it's all right,'—so we had a little more time to hustle in. And we *hustled!* By chance Herne and I went into a kind of beer-garden, called the Coliseum, kept by John Hamlin. There was a stage, and "Fred" Wren, in "On Time," was giving impersonations of German character,—sort of imitation of J. K. Emmet in 'Fritz.' The 'business' was bad; there weren't thirty people in the house when Herne and I chanced in. I immediately proposed to Hamlin that we bring out 'Chums,' which we had renamed 'Hearts of Oak.' He agreed to let us have the theatre, but Hamlin had no money to invest, so we had to get a production and assemble a company, all without a cent of capital! However, we got credit in one place or another, and did it,—a production costing thousands, on credit, and without a dollar of our own in it! We had a



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big success, although Hamlin's Coliseum wasn't much of a place."

### "HEARTS OF OAK."

"Hearts of Oak" ("Chums") is based on a melodrama called "The Mariner's Compass," by an English dramatist, Henry Leslie (1829-1881), which was first produced at Astley's Theatre, London, in 1865, under the management of that wonderfully enterprising person Edward Tyrrell Smith (1804-1877), and was first acted in America, at the New Bowery Theatre, New York, May 22, that year,—with Edward Eddy as *Silas Engleheart*, the prototype of *Terry Dennison*, and Mrs. W. G. Jones as *Hetty Arnold*, the prototype of *Chrystal*. It was announced in Chicago as "Herne's and Belasco's American Play, in Five Acts and Six Tableaux," and it was first produced there on November 17, 1879, at Hamlin's Theatre,—I find no authority for calling it the Coliseum, but my records of Chicago theatres in that period are meagre,—with this cast,—Mrs. Herne (Katherine Corcoran) then making her first appearance in that city:

<i>Terry Dennison</i> .....	James A. Herne.
<i>Ruby Darrell</i> .....	Harry Mainhall.
<i>Uncle Davy</i> .....	William H. Crompton.
<i>Mr. Ellingham</i> .....	David Belasco.
<i>Owen Garroway</i> .....	Frank K. Pierce.



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<i>Foreman of the Mill</i> .....	William A. Lavalle.
<i>Clerk of the Mill</i> .....	William Lawrence.
<i>Will Barton</i> .....	Lillie Hamilton.
<i>Chrystal</i> .....	Katherine Corcoran.
<i>Aunt Betsy</i> .....	Rose Watson.
<i>Little Chrystal</i> .....	Alice Hamilton.
<i>Tawdrey</i> .....	Dollie Hamilton.
<i>Mr. Parker</i> .....	J. A. Andrews.
<i>Tom</i> .....	J. Sherman.
<i>Sleuth</i> .....	T. Gossman.
<i>The Baby</i> .....	Herself

After its production at Hamlin's Theatre,—designated by Belasco as “a big success,”—“Hearts of Oak” was taken on a tour, but was presently brought back to Chicago, and on March 15, 1880, it was presented at Hooley's Theatre, where it was again received with public favor. In the meantime the fact that it was in a considerable degree a variant of an English play of earlier date had been perceived and made known, and Hamlin, offended and resentful because Herne and Belasco, returning to Chicago, had chosen to appear at Hooley's instead of coming back to him, announced a revival of the earlier play,—Leslie's “The Mariner's Compass,”—with the title of “Hearts of Oak.” A suit at law followed, the ultimate decision being that “The Mariner's Compass,” unprotected by American copyright, was free to any person in the United



States who might choose to use it, irrespective of its author's moral rights, but that the title of "Hearts of Oak" was owned by Herne and Belasco, in association with their play, and could not lawfully be associated with another. The inimical purpose of Hamlin was thus, in a measure, defeated, but Belasco's troubles did not stop there. Herne evinced much displeasure on learning that Belasco's play, on which he had co-labored, was not strictly original. An alleged ground of Herne's displeasure was the lawsuit. "Why didn't you tell me about 'The Mariner's Compass'?" he said, reproaching Belasco: "*now* I've a damned lawsuit on my hands!" "Well," Belasco rejoined, "I don't see why I should have told you anything about the old play; and, anyway, I don't see what you have to complain about. You ought to be mighty glad you've got a half-interest in something worth a lawsuit to protect,—and you haven't got the suit on *your* hands any more than I have on *mine*!" The actual ground of Herne's dissatisfaction, judging by his subsequent treatment of Belasco, probably was his realization that, if he had, in the first place, been made acquainted with "The Mariner's Compass," he could himself have adapted that play to his own use without forming a partnership with anybody.



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### FIRST VENTURE IN NEW YORK.

The success gained in Chicago and other cities relieved the Belasco-Herne triumvirate from immediate pecuniary embarrassment, and notwithstanding the existence of a latent and growing antagonism the path to fortune seemed to have opened for them. From Chicago, after two weeks at Hooley's Theatre, those managers carried their play to New York, an opening having been obtained through the agency of Brooks & Dickson (Joseph Brooks [1849-1916] and James B—— Dickson, now [1917] business manager for Robert B. Mantell), and "Hearts of Oak" was presented, for the first time in the metropolis, March 29, 1880, at the New Fifth Avenue Theatre, then opened under the management of Edward E. Rice and Jacob Nunnemacher. This was the cast:

<i>Terry Dennison</i> .....	James A. Herne.
<i>Ruby Darrell</i> .....	Harry Mainhall.
<i>Uncle Davy</i> .....	William H. Crompton.
<i>Mr. Ellingham</i> .....	J. W. Dean.
<i>Owen Garroway</i> .....	H. M. Brown.
<i>Foreman of the Mill</i> .....	J. S. Andrews.
<i>Clerk of the Mill</i> .....	William Lawrence.
<i>Will Barton</i> .....	Lillie Hamilton.
<i>Chrystal</i> .....	Katherine Corcoran.
<i>Aunt Betsy</i> .....	Henrietta Bert Osborne.



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<i>Little Chrystal</i> .....	Alice Hamilton.
<i>Tawdrey</i> .....	Dollie Hamilton.
<i>Mr. Parker</i> .....	Mr. Harvey.
<i>Tom</i> .....	J. Sherman.
<i>Sleuth</i> .....	T. Gossman.
<i>The Baby</i> .....	Herself.

### JAMES ALFRED HERNE.

James Alfred Herne (1889-1901) has been incorrectly and injudiciously vaunted as a great, original, representative American dramatist. The claim is preposterous. Herne was not a dramatist, he was a playwright (that is, a mechanic, a *maker* of plays, mechanically, from stock material, precisely as a wheelwright is a maker of wheels), and as a playwright he was less distinctive than as an actor. He adopted the latter vocation in youth, first as an amateur, then as a member of a stock company, making his first professional appearance at a theatre in Troy, New York. He obtained good training. He participated in performances of standard plays with some of the best actors who have graced the American Stage,—among them James Booth Roberts (1818-1901), Edward Loomis Davenport (1815-1877), and the younger James William Wallack (1818-1878). He did not possess a tithe of the power and versatility of Davenport, but he was deeply affected by the influence



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of that noble actor, and he played several parts in close imitation of him,—notably *Sikes*, in “*Oliver Twist*.” His dramatic instinct was keen, but his mind was not imaginative and the natural bent of it was toward prosy literalism. He was early, strongly, and continuously dominated by the literal methods and the humanitarian and reformatory spirit of the novels of Dickens. He liked the utilitarian and matter-of-fact embellishments with which some of those novels abound, and he was attracted by such characters as *Peggotty*, a part which he acted and of which his performance was creditable. As an actor he aimed to be photographic, he copied actual life in commonplace aspects as closely as he could, and often he was slow, dull, and tedious. As a playwright he was deficient in the faculty of invention and in the originality of characterization. He tinkered the plays of other writers, always with a view to the enhancement or introduction of graphic situations. The principal plays with which his name is associated are “*Hearts of Oak*,” “*Drifting Apart*,” “*Sag Harbor*,” “*Margaret Fleming*,” “*Shore Acres*,” and “*The Rev. Griffith Davenport*.” “*Hearts of Oak*” is Belasco’s revamp of “*The Mariner’s Compass*,” modified and expanded. The characters in it are not American: they are transformed English characters. It was not Herne’s



plan, it was Belasco's, to rehabilitate the earlier play by Leslie, shift the places of the action, shuffle the scenes, change the names of the persons, introduce incidents from other plays, add unusual "stage effects," and so manufacture something that might pass for a novelty. In reply to a question of mine as to Herne's share in the making of "Hearts of Oak," Belasco said "he did *a lot of good work* on it," and when I asked for specification of that work I was told "he introduced a lot of *Rip Van Winkle* stuff." "Drifting Apart" is based on an earlier play, called "Mary, the Fisherman's Daughter." "Sag Harbor" is a variant of "Hearts of Oak." "Margaret Fleming" is mainly the work of Mrs. Herne, and is one of those crude and completely ineffectual pieces of hysterical didacticism which are from time to time produced on the stage with a view to the dismay of libertines by an exhibition of some of the evil consequences of licentious conduct. In that play a righteously offended wife bares her bosom to the public gaze in order to suckle a famished infant, of which her dissolute husband is the father by a young woman whom he has seduced, betrayed, and abandoned to want and misery: libertines, of course, are always reformed by spectacles of that kind! (This incident, by the way, occurs, under other circumstances, in the fourth



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chapter of "Hide and Seek," by Wilkie Collins, published in 1854.) "The Rev. Griffith Davenport" was deduced from a novel called "The Unofficial Patriot," by Helen H. Gardner. "Shore Acres" is, in its one vital dramatic ingredient, derived from a play by Frank Murdoch, called "The Keepers of Lighthouse Cliff,"—in which Herne had acted years before "Shore Acres" was written. It incorporates, also, many of the real stage properties and much of the stage business,—the real supper, etc.,—used in "Hearts of Oak." Its climax is the quarrel of the brothers *Martin* and *Nathan'l Berry*, the suddenly illumined beacon, kindled by *Uncle Nat*, and the hairbreadth escape of the imperilled ship,—taken, without credit, from Murdoch's drama. Herne localized his plays in America and, to a certain extent, treated American subjects, but he made no addition to American Drama, and his treatment of the material that he "borrowed" or adapted never rose above respectable mediocrity. It was as an actor that he gained repute and merited commemoration. He was early impressed by the example of Joseph Jefferson and was emulative of him: he appeared in Jefferson's most famous character, *Rip Van Winkle*, but he did not evince a particle of that innate charm, that imaginative, spiritual quality, which irradiated Jef-





From a photograph by (Stevens?).

The Albert Davis Collection.

**JAMES A. HERNE**







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fer's impersonation of the pictorial vagabond and exalted it into the realm of the poetic ideal. Herne earnestly wished for a part in which he might win a popularity and opulence in some degree commensurate with those obtained by Jefferson as *Rip Van Winkle*: he eventually found it, or something like it, in *Terry Dennison*, in "Hearts of Oak," which he acted, far and wide, for many years, and by which he accumulated a fortune of about \$250,000. The influence of his acting, at its best, was humanitarian and in that respect highly commendable.—On April 3, 1878, Herne and Katherine Corcoran were wedded, in San Francisco,—that being Herne's second marriage. His first wife was Helen Western. He was a native of Cohoes, New York. The true name of this actor was James Ahearn, which, when he adopted the profession of the Stage, he changed to James A. Herne. It is given in the great register of San Francisco as James Alfred Herne. His death occurred, June 2, 1901, at No. 79 Convent Avenue, near 145th Street, New York.

### ANALYSIS OF "HEARTS OF OAK."

I remember the first performance of "Hearts of Oak" in New York. The play was a patchwork of hackneyed situations and incidents, culled and



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refurbished from such earlier plays as "Little Em'ly," "Rip Van Winkle," "Leah the Forsaken," and "Enoch Arden." Some of those situations were theatrically effective, and the quality of the fabric was instinct with tender feeling. The articulation of the parts, meaning the mechanism, indicated, to some extent, an expert hand,—which unquestionably its chief manipulator, Belasco, possessed, and which he has since more amply shown. The element of picture, however, exceeded that of action, and the element of commonplace realism, manifested partly in the drawing of character, partly in the dialogue, and largely in the accessories and stage business, was so excessive as to be tiresome. Real water, real beans, real boiled potatoes, and various other ingredients of a real supper, together with a real cat and a real (and much discontented) baby, were among the real objects employed in the representation. Such things, particularly when profusely used in a play, are injurious to dramatic effect, because they concentrate attention on themselves and distract it from the subject and the action to be considered. Accessories should blend into the investiture of a play and not be excrescences upon it. There is, however, a large public that likes to see on the stage such real objects as it customarily sees in the dwelling or the street,—a real fireplace,



a real washtub, a real dog, a real horse, all the usual trappings of actual life: that is the public which finds its chief artistic pleasure in *recognition*. It was present on many occasions during the career of "Hearts of Oak," and with this plethora of real and commonplace objects it was much pleased.

In the story of "Hearts of Oak" a young man, *Ruby Darrell*, and a young woman, *Chrystal* (*Dennison?*), who love each other and wish to wed, privately agree to abnegate themselves in order that the young woman may marry their guardian and benefactor, *Terry Dennison*, out of gratitude to him. This immoral marriage is accomplished and in time the wife becomes a mother. In time, also, the injured guardian discovers,—what, if he had possessed even ordinary discernment, he would have discovered in the beginning,—that his wife's affections are fixed on *Darrell*. The miserable *Dennison* then goes away, after privately arranging that if he does not return within five years *Darrell* shall wed with *Chrystal*. Six years pass; *Dennison* is reported to have perished at sea in the wreck of a Massachusetts ship, and *Chrystal* and *Ruby* erect a churchyard monument to his memory. Then *Chrystal*, believing herself to be a widow, marries her lover. But the desolate husband is not dead; he reappears, blind, destitute and wretched, on the



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wedding day, and in a colloquy with his child, outside of the church within which the marriage is being solemnized and seated on the base of his memorial among the graves, he ascertains the existent circumstances and presently expires, while his wife and little daughter pitifully minister to him as to a stranger. The misery and pathos of the experience and situation are obvious. It is also obvious that, in the fulfilment of a central purpose to create a situation and depict a character instinct with misery and pathos, the element of probability was disregarded. The chief part is that of the injured, afflicted, suffering guardian, who, as a dramatic character, is a variant of *Enoch Arden* and *Harebell*.

In acting *Dennison*, Herne, while often heavy and monotonous, gained sympathy and favor by the simplicity of his demeanor, his facile assumption of manliness, and his expert simulation of deep feeling; but he did nothing that had not been done before, and much better done, by other actors,—in particular, by Edwin Adams in *Enoch Arden*, and by William Rufus Blake and Charles Fisher in *Peggotty* and kindred parts, of which the fibre is rugged manliness and magnanimity. Katherine Corcoran, playing *Chrystal*, gave a performance that was interesting more by personality than by art. She had not then been long on the Stage. She



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was handsome, graceful, and winning, of slender figure, with an animated, eagerly expressive face, blue-gray eyes, silky brown hair, and a sweet voice. In calm moments and level speaking she was efficient. In excitement her vocalism became shrill and her action spasmodic. Scenery of more than common merit, painted by William Voegtlin, was provided to embellish the play, at the Fifth Avenue Theatre. One picture, in particular, representing a prospect of a tranquil seacoast, was excellent in composition, true and fine in color, and poetic in quality; another effectively portrayed a broad expanse of troubled sea, darkening ominously under a sombre sky tumultuous with flying scud. Herne somewhat improved the play in the course of his protracted repetitions of it, after he parted from Belasco, but he always retained in it the "real" trappings which Belasco had introduced. Both those actors, as playwrights, were conjunctive in favor of "limbs and outward flourishes,"—the "real tubs" of *Mr. Crummles*.

### FAILURE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

The play, which without Belasco's consent or knowledge was announced in New York as "by James A. Herne" (mention being made, in the pro-



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gramme, that it was remotely based on "The Mariner's Compass," but, practically, was Herne's original composition!), failed there. Belasco states, in his "Story," that it was produced in "the summer time," and adds that "notwithstanding the play's success, we could not combat the intense humidity." That statement is incorrect. March is not summer, and it was not "intense *humidity*" but intense *frost* that could not be combated. The business was further injured by the fact that Herne was on several occasions incapacitated to appear, and Belasco replaced him as *Terry Dennison*. The initial expenses had been heavy, the profit was soon almost dissipated, the engagement was ended April 16, and, on going to Philadelphia, to fulfil an engagement at Mrs. Drew's Arch Street Theatre, the partners quarrelled. Herne there expressed to Belasco his opinion that the play was rubbish, that he was wasting his time by acting in it, and proposed that Belasco should buy his half interest, for \$1,500, or that he should buy Belasco's for the same amount,—“knowing,” Belasco has told me, “that I had not drawn any of my share of the profits, while there were any; that I had been living and keeping my family, in San Francisco, on \$50 a week (I was allowed that and talked to all the time about ‘the barrels of money “Dave” would have at the



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end of the season'!), and also knowing that I didn't have fifteen hundred cents!" Herne, after profuse condemnation of the play and harsh censure of Belasco, in which he was sustained by his business associate, Frederick W. Burt, finally obtained Belasco's signature to an agreement to sell to Herne, for \$1,500, all his half-interest in "Hearts of Oak," and so that play became Herne's exclusive property. The purchase money was not paid, but Herne gave a promissory note for it. Later, realizing that he had acted imprudently, Belasco called on his friend Mrs. John Drew, informed her of the business, and asked her advice. That eminently practical lady was both sympathetic and indignant. She commended him to her attorneys, Messrs. Shakespeare and Devlin, and desired that they should see what could be done "for this boy." There was, however, little to do. "You are of age," said Devlin, "you've signed an agreement; you'll have to stand by it,—but I'll get you the \$1,500. The first thing is to find where Herne banks." That information was easily obtained, and Belasco and Devlin repaired to the bank,—where they met Herne coming out, and where, a few moments later, they were told that he had withdrawn his money and closed his account. The \$1,500 was not paid until several years later, when Belasco, then employed at the Madison



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Square Theatre, New York, stated the facts to Marshall H. Mallory, one of the managers of that house, and, with assistance of his lawyers, obtained from Herne payment of the debt, with interest.

### SAN FRANCISCO AGAIN.

Meantime, Belasco had been left in a painful predicament. "I had," he told me, "quite honestly, but very extravagantly, painted our success in brilliant colors when writing to my dear wife,—and there I was, in Philadelphia, without enough money to pay my fare back to San Francisco, and nobody to borrow from. I went, first, to New York, hoping to get employment, but luck was against me—I could get nothing, and I spent three nights on the benches in Union Square Park. I met Marcus Mayer, a friend of mine, in the Park one morning, and he got part of my story from me, lent me some money, and promised to try to help me further. But I had to get to San Francisco, and as soon as he lent me a little money I made up my mind to *start*. It took me eighteen days to make the trip, but I did it,—paying what I could, persuading conductors and brakemen to let me ride free, if only for a few miles, and, when I was put off, stealing rides on anything that was going. I got there, but it was a pretty wretched homecoming. I had



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to swallow any pride I had left and go to work again at the Baldwin,—where I'd been stage manager and playwright and amounted to something,—and where now I played anything,—‘bits,’ mostly,—given me: I got only \$25 a week.”

The story of Belasco's venture with “Hearts of Oak” has been told minutely for the reason that it involves his first determined effort to break away from what he viewed as thralldom in the Theatre of San Francisco, and make for himself a position in the metropolis of the country. The failure of that effort was a bitter humiliation and disappointment to him. It did not, however, weaken his purpose. After he rejoined the Baldwin he was not long constrained to occupy a subservient position.

### BELASCO'S RECOLLECTIONS OF ADELAIDE NEILSON.

One of the associations of Belasco's professional life much prized by him is that with the lovely woman and great actress Adelaide Neilson. Miss Neilson first appeared in San Francisco, March 10, 1874, at the California Theatre, acting *Juliet*,—of which part she was the best representative who has been seen within the last sixty years. During her engagement at the California, which lasted till March 30, and in the course of which she acted



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*Rosalind*, *Lady Teazle*, *Julia*, in "The Hunchback," and *Pauline*, in "The Lady of Lyons," as well as *Juliet*, Belasco was employed in the theatre, acting as an assistant to the prompter, and participating as a super in all the plays that were presented. "Little a thing as it is," he has said to me, "I have always been proud to remember that I danced with her, in the minuet, in 'Romeo and Juliet,' the first night she ever played in our city. I never saw such wonderful eyes, or heard a voice so silver-toned, so full of pathos, so rich and thrilling. I shall never forget how deeply affected I was when, in the dance, for the first time I touched her hand and she turned those wonderful eyes on *me*."

When Belasco was re-employed at the Baldwin Miss Neilson was acting there, in the second week of her farewell engagement, which began on June 8. On July 17 that engagement closed, and one of the brightest yet saddest of theatrical careers came to an end. Belasco, always closely attentive to his stage duties, never depended on anybody but himself to give the signals for raising and lowering the curtain, and, on that night, he "rang down" on the last performance Adelaide Neilson ever gave. The bill was the Balcony Scene, from "Romeo and Juliet," and the play of "Amy Robsart." In the course of the performance Belasco, after the



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Balcony Scene, went to assist her in descending from the elevated platform and, as she came down, she laid a hand on his shoulder and sprang to the stage,—losing a slipper as she did so. Belasco took it up. “You may keep it,” she said, “for Rosemary,”—and, says Belasco, “having thanked her I nailed it, then and there, to the wall by the prompter’s stand and there it stayed, as a mascot, for years.” Referring to that last night of her stage career, Belasco has written the following reminiscence:

### THE BLACK PEARL

“Like other stars of the day, Miss Neilson expressed a desire to give every member of her company a memento. I was waiting at the green-room door to escort her to the hotel, when she called me into her dressing-room. ‘You are so weird and mysterious, and perhaps I may never see you again. Look over those things and choose something for yourself.’ On her dressing-room table she had piled all her wonderful jewels, a fortune of immense value. I remember that her maid, a little deformed woman, stood by me as I hesitated. ‘Yes, to bring you luck,’ she replied and there was a faint chuckle in her throat. Rubies, diamonds, emeralds—they dazzled my eyes. I finally reached forward and picked a black pearl. I said, ‘I’ll take this.’ Miss Neilson’s face turned white, and she closed her eyes. ‘Oh, David, why do you ask for that?’ she cried, and I dropped it as though I had done an evil thing. ‘I’m superstitious,’ she confessed. ‘My trunk is full of nails, horseshoes, and the luckiest thing of all is that little black pearl. I dialike



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to refuse you anything, but I know you will understand.' I hastily selected a small emerald, and with a feeling almost of temerity I left the room. All during the farewell supper that followed she would bring the conversation back to the strangeness of my choice, until I thought she would never cease, and just on my account. 'If I gave up that pearl, I shouldn't live a month. Some one told me that, and I believe it,' she said.

"When she left on the morrow she made me promise that if I ever visited London I would seek her out, but that was the last I saw of Adelaide Neilson. She had gone no farther than Reno when she wrote me, sending me a little package in which was buried the black pearl. 'I cannot get your voice out of my mind,' she wrote. Six months afterwards she died in a little French village. She had returned tired and dusty to the inn from a ramble in the leafy lanes of Normandy, and, drinking a glass of ice-cold milk, was suddenly dead in an hour. [She died in less than *one* month—August 15, 1880, at a chalet, in the Bois de Boulogne, Paris, becoming ill while driving.—W. W.]

"Of course I had told my family the incident, and one afternoon, while I was out, my mother went to my room, and, for fear of ill-luck pursuing me, destroyed the black pearl. Such incidents have been put into plays and audiences have laughed over the improbability, but here's an indisputable fact. Charge it to the long arm of coincidence, if you will, but in my own career I have met so many occurrences that are stranger than fiction that I cannot doubt the workings of coincidence any longer.

"Often during this engagement she had spoken of Mr. William Winter in terms of gratitude and respect, and that the sentiment must have been mutual we have ample verification in his many valuable books. From these



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pages we of to-day are able to recreate once more the golden art of the greatest *Juliet* of all times. 'Dear William Winter,' I remember hearing her say, 'how much I have to thank him for help and advice!'

### MISS NEILSON'S GOOD INFLUENCE.

Adelaide Neilson, whatever may have been the errors of her early life, was intrinsically a noble woman, and any man might well be proud to have gained her kindly interest. In the often abused art of acting, to pass, as she did, from the girlish glee and artless merriment of *Viola* to the romantic, passion-touched, tremulous entrancement of *Juliet*, thence to the ripe womanhood of *Imogen*, and finally to the grandeur of *Isabella*, is to fill the imagination with an ideal of all that is excellent in woman and all that makes her the angel of man's existence and the chief grace and glory of the world. All acting is illusion: "the best in this kind are but shadows." Yet she who could thus fill up the measure of ideal beauty surely possessed glorious elements. Much for her own sake is this actress remembered—much, also, for the ever "bright imaginings" she prompted and the high thoughts that her influence inspired and justified as to woman's nature. As the poet bore in his heart the distant, dying song of the reaper, "long after



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it was heard no more," so and with such feeling is her acting treasured in memory. Woman, for her sake and the sake of what she interpreted, has ever been, by those who saw and knew her, more highly prized and revered,—a beneficent result the value of which cannot be overstated. As Byron wrote:

"The very first  
Of human life must spring from woman's breast;  
Your first small words are taught you from her lips;  
Your first tears quenched by her, and your last sighs  
Breathed out in woman's hearing."

### "PAUL ARNIFF."

During Miss Neilson's engagement at the Baldwin Belasco's indefatigable industry had been bestowed on a play, modelled on "The Danicheffs,"—a drama on a Russian subject which had been produced at the Union Square Theatre, New York, February 5, 1877. His play, named "Paul Arniff; or, The Love of a Serf," was derived in part from "The Black Doctor," and was announced as "founded on one of the very best pieces ever produced at the Porte St. Martin Theatre, Paris." It was not remarkable, being a loosely constructed melodrama,—some portions of which were well devised and





**ADELAIDE NEILSON**

*"And O, to think the sun can shine,  
The birds can sing, the flowers can bloom,  
And she, whose soul was all divine,  
Be darkly mouldering in the tomb!"*

**-W. W.**

From a miniature on porcelain.  
Author's Collection.



THE LITTLE FAIRY

OF THE WOODS

AND THE LITTLE FAIRY

OF THE WOODS

AND THE LITTLE FAIRY

OF THE WOODS

AND THE LITTLE FAIRY

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AND THE LITTLE FAIRY

OF THE WOODS

ADELAIDE NELSON

"And O, to think the sun can shine,  
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And she, whose soul was all divine,  
Be darkly mouldering in the tomb!"

-W.W.

And the little fairy  
Of the woods











cleverly written, while other portions were clumsy and turgid. It depicted the experience of a Russian serf, *Paul Arniff*, who, loving an imperious woman of exalted social station, *Marianna Droganoff*, and finding his passion played with, first forced that disdainful female into marriage with him (as an alternative to drowning with him, on a remote tidal island to which he had lured her), and subsequently, raising himself to distinction by development of his natural talents, gained her genuine affection, and made her happy. Recalling the production of that play, Belasco writes: "At the time 'Paul Arniff' was put into rehearsal there was in the Baldwin company a tall, slender young woman of singular complexion and striking appearance, whose stage name was Adelaide Stanhope. She came from Australia, where she had gained some reputation, but she had had no good opportunity at the Baldwin and was discouraged and dissatisfied. She and I had become friends, she was cast for the heroine of my play and, knowing the cause of her discontent and wishing to help her, I built up her character all I could during rehearsals,—O'Neill, ever chivalrous, generous and sympathetic, acquiescing, though it encroached a good deal on his own part: but the success she made and her consequent happiness more than repaid us both. She afterward became the wife of Nelson Wheat-



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croft, with whom I was associated at the Lyceum and the Empire, in New York.”—The Baldwin stock company, succeeding Miss Neilson, presented “Paul Arniff” on July 19, 1880, and acted in that play for one week. This was the cast:

<i>Paul Arniff</i> .....	James O'Neill.
<i>Count Andrea Drozanoff</i> .....	James O. Barrows.
<i>Baron Woronoff</i> .....	John Wilson.
<i>M. de Verville</i> .....	—— Doud.
<i>Father Eliavna</i> .....	—— Nowlin.
<i>Marianna</i> .....	Adelaide Stanhope.
<i>Princess Anna Orloff</i> .....	Jean Clara Walters.
<i>Countess Drozanoff</i> .....	Kate Denin.
<i>Wanda</i> .....	Blanche Thorne.
<i>Tforza</i> .....	Nellie Wetherill.

### WANING FORTUNES AT THE BALDWIN.

Adelaide Neilson's farewell season at the Baldwin Theatre (during which it was guaranteed that she should receive not less than \$500 a performance) was almost the last notably remunerative engagement filled there during Maguire's tenancy of that house. Indeed, theatrically, “the most high and palmy state” of San Francisco was passed, and the history of the Baldwin, and of the stock company at that theatre, for the two years which followed (July, 1880, to July, 1882), is one of anxious striv-



ing, strenuous endeavor, often brilliant achievement, public indifference, defeated hopes, declining fortunes, fitful renewals of prosperity quickly followed by periods in which bad business grew always a little worse, and ultimate failure and disintegration. When Belasco began his effort to rehabilitate and reestablish himself there, "playing mostly bits," as he expressed it to me, James H. Vinson and Robert Eberle were, officially, in charge of the stage and, though he did much, if not most, of the actual labor of stage management, his services were not publicly acknowledged. For reasons of business expediency, therefore, he, for a time, reverted to use of the name of Walter Kingsley, which appears in various programmes. After a few weeks, however, Eberle withdrew from the stage, devoting himself to business affairs of the theatre, and Belasco soon worked back into his former place as director and playwright. His "Paul Arniff" was followed, July 26, by the first presentment of a drama, taken from the French, entitled "Deception," by Samuel W. Piercy, who personated the chief character in it, *Raoul de Ligniers*. Later, that play, renamed "The Legion of Honor," was presented by Piercy in many cities of our country: it was brought out at the Park Theatre, New York, on November 9, 1880. That capital actor Frederic de Belleville, coming from



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Australia, made his first appearance in America when it was acted at the Baldwin. "Deception" was followed, August 9, by "An Orphan of the State" (known to our Eastern Stage as "A Child of the State"), and, on August 16, by the first appearance of John T. Malone, who performed as *Richelieu*,—Barton Hill playing *De Mauprat*. Belasco greatly liked Malone and, in his "Story," gives this glimpse of him:

### AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE,—JOHN T. MALONE.

"An oldtime companion of mine at this period was John T. Malone, studying for the Catholic priesthood. But beneath the cassock my friend harbored a great love for the Stage, and among his intimate circle had won quite a reputation as a Shakespearean scholar. I remember the morning he came to the Baldwin Theatre and told me the story of his ambition. I engaged him at once, struck by his personality! 'I've been waiting many years,' said he, and now the time has come.' . . . Later, he supported Booth and Barrett and his name will ever be associated with that splendid gentleman who founded The Players. As the years passed he became a victim of Time's revenges; nurtured in the blank verse school, his engagements became fewer and fewer until they utterly dwindled away. Often I picture him as an actor of exceedingly great talent, but it had no outlet for its practical use. His is one of the many sad cases in the theatrical world of 'exits' marked by poverty and loneliness,"



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I know not whether Malone ever studied for the priesthood: I know, however, that he was educated for the profession of law, and that in his young manhood he practised law in San Francisco. He was born in 1854, I believe in that city, and he died in New York, January 15, 1906: he richly merited commemoration. He was a good man and a talented, zealous, reverent servant of the Stage. No actor of our time more dearly loved his profession or more devoutly and unselfishly labored in its support, though his career was not attended with any specially brilliant achievements or extraordinary incidents. He was a careful and thoughtful student of Shakespeare, and his acquaintance with the works of the great dramatist was intricate, extensive, and minute. He wrote much upon that subject, and his contributions to contemporary magazines, in the vein of Shakespearean criticism, are of peculiar interest. In his domestic life he was unfortunate and unhappy, but to the last he retained a philosophical spirit and a genial mind. As a comrade, among intellectual men, he was both loved and admired,—because his nature was noble, his heart was kind, his taste was pure, his mind was rich, and his manners were gentle. It was a pleasure to know him, and the remembrance of him lingers sweetly in the recollection of a few old friends.



## "TRUE TO THE CORE."

On August 18 H. J. Byron's comedy of "The Upper Crust" was played at the Baldwin, in conjunction with the burlesque opera of "Little Amy Robsart," and that double bill held the stage for a fortnight. During that time Belasco completed an adaptation of the "prize drama" by T. P. Cooke, entitled "True to the Core,"—first acted at the Bowery Theatre, New York, December 17, 1866. It had been seen in San Francisco twelve years earlier, in its original form. I have been able to find only a mutilated programme of the performance of Belasco's version, August 30, 1880, which gives part of the cast as follows:

<i>Truegold</i> .....	James O'Neill.
<i>Geoffrey Dangerfield</i> .....	Frederic de Belleville.
<i>Lord High Admiral of England</i> .....	A. D. Bradley.
<i>Marah</i> .....	Adelaide Stanhope.
<i>Mabel Truegold</i> .....	Lillian Andrews.
<i>Queen Elizabeth</i> .....	Eva West.

"True to the Core" is an old-fashioned melodrama, of which the hero, *Truegold*, is an English pilot who passes through many "moving accidents by flood and field," being seized by treasonous conspirators, placed on board a vessel of the Spanish Armada, which he



pilots upon a rock, instead of into Portsmouth Harbor, and who is in danger, subsequently, of losing his head on the block rather than break his word, but who is followed, served, and ultimately saved by a gypsy woman, *Marah*, whom he has befriended. It was played for one week to audiences of fair size and was succeeded, in order, by William G. Wills' "Ninon,"—acted September 6, for the first time in America,—“Aladdin Number Two; or, The Wonderful Scamp,” “Forget Me Not,” Bartley Campbell's “The Galley Slave,” the same author's “Fairfax,” and “Golden Game,”—all produced under Belasco's care, and all, unhappily, performed to lessening receipts.

The next incident of note at the Baldwin was the coming of William E. Sheridan, who opened there November 15, playing *King Louis the Eleventh*, and whose advent brought back a measure of prosperity to the theatre. Belasco, in his “Story,” records this remembrance and estimate of Sheridan:

A STERLING ACTOR AND AN INTERESTING  
ESTIMATE:—WILLIAM E. SHERIDAN.

“We were sadly in need of an attraction at this time, and so, when W. E. Sheridan arrived, from Philadelphia, which city pointed to him with much just pride, we engaged him at a nominal salary,



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and immediately he soared into popularity, being acclaimed one of the most versatile actors who had ever visited the Coast. Three times his engagement was extended, for the people of San Francisco were loath to let him depart. His *Othello* was a scholarly performance; 'A New Way to Pay Old Debts' increased his popularity, as did also 'The Fool's Revenge,' 'The Lyons Mail,' and *Shylock*. He was essentially a virile actor, forceful and with a magnetic voice that was music in the ear. And I have seen many a *Louis the Eleventh*, but he was the greatest of them all, not even excepting that wonderful genius, Sir Henry Irving. Success found him greatly astonished, for when he left Philadelphia he was practically unknown to any but his townspeople, and now when his name was heralded abroad, the East listened with a certain curiosity. As we played to crowded houses and the applause floated to his dressing-room, he could scarcely credit this sudden fame which had fallen upon him. More than once Sheridan turned to me and said: 'I've found it all out now when it is too late.'"

Belasco's estimate of Sheridan is interesting and it should be preserved—because it *is* Belasco's: the opinion of the foremost stage manager of his time, about any actor, should be of interest. It would,



however, be far more instructive and valuable if the *reasons* for it were also given: but in a long experience I have found few commentators on acting who give reasons for their declared opinions. *Why* Sheridan should have felt that he had "found it all out when it was too late" passes my understanding,—because, in 1880, he was in the very prime of life, forty years of age; contrary to Belasco's impression, he was well known throughout our country, and, moreover, he continued to be abundantly successful for more than six years after his initial appearance in San Francisco. He was a sterling actor and richly deserved success. I knew him and liked him much. He took up "King Louis XI." because of the immense impression created by Irving's revival of that play at the London Lyceum, March 9, 1878, and he gave an effective and admirable performance in it. Nevertheless, he was not, in my judgment, even for a moment rightly comparable in the part with Irving,—because nowhere in his embodiment of *Louis* did he reveal even an approximate of the wonderful personality, the indomitable intellect, the inerrant apprehension of subtle traits of complex character, or the faculty of identification, the grim menace, the baleful power, the grisly humor, or the exquisite felicity of expressive art with which Irving displayed his ideal of that human monster of cruelty



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and guile. Such acting as that of Henry Irving in the scene of *King Louis'* confessional, the scene of his paroxysm of maniacal wrath, the scene of his supplication for life, and the scene of his august and awful death, opens the depths of the human heart, lays bare the possible depravity of human nature, depicts a great character in such a way as to illumine the historic page, and conveys a most solemn monition on the conduct of life.

During his first engagement in San Francisco Sheridan acted *Rover*, in "Wild Oats"; *Lesurques* and *Dubosc*, in "The Lyons Mail"; *Claude Melnotte*, *Shylock*, *Richelieu*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Sir Giles Overreach*, in "A New Way to Pay Old Debts." Laura Don, making her first appearance in San Francisco, November 24, played *Lady Amaranth* to his *Rover*, and *Julie* to his *Lesurques*: Lillie Eddington played *Pauline*, *Portia*, and other leading female parts with him. He was supported by "the new Baldwin Company," which had been organized just prior to his coming to San Francisco, and which included Joseph R. Grismer and "Harry" Colton. All the plays were produced under Belasco's stage management, and his familiarity with them and his indefatigable zeal in rehearsals made his assistance invaluable to Sheridan. That actor filled several subsequent engagements in San Francisco, and his acting



so vividly impressed Belasco that he gave public imitations of him in *King Louis* and in other parts. Sheridan served in the Union Army during the Civil War and attained to the rank of captain. He married the actress Louise Davenport (his first wife, Sarah Hayes, died in 1872), went with her to Australia in 1886, and died there, in Sydney, May 15, 1887. He was the impersonator of *Beamish McCoul*, in "Arrah-na-Pogue," when that play was originally performed in America, at Niblo's Garden, New York, July 12, 1865,—an occasion I have particular reason to remember because that was the first theatrical performance reviewed by me for "The New York Tribune."

Of Laura Don, with whom Belasco became acquainted at the time of Sheridan's first San Francisco engagement, he gives this recollection:

LAURA DON.—AN UNFULFILLED AMBITION.

"Laura Don was a painter whose landscapes and portraits had won her distinction in the art world. Indeed, she was quite a spoilt child of the Muses, for the gods had dowered her with many gifts. Nature had been kind to her in every way, mentally and physically, for she had a face and figure of great attractiveness; her every movement was serpentine and voluptuous. This was further heightened by an excitable temperament, keyed to the highest pitch, and I never saw anyone who had a more insatiable thirst for fame; so much so, indeed, that her health was



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on the verge of being undermined. I saw in this woman every possibility of making a wonderful *Cleopatra*, and when she had joined the Baldwin Theatre I spent many hours after performances training her in the rôle (*sic*). Then one Sunday afternoon, when we had reached the Death Scene, Laura Don fell in a faint, and I looked down to find drops of blood coming from her mouth. So this was the reason for the hectic flush, for the irresponsible moods and eccentricities! When she came to, we had removed every outward sign of her fatal malady. But Laura Don was not to be deceived. Many times when we had been working together she would exclaim, 'Why is it I am so weak? Why is it I do not gain strength?' For two days she remained in her room, and then she sent for me and confessed that she had known all along of her consumptive tendencies. 'I shall never play *Cleopatra*,' she said; 'you must find someone else to take my place. I suppose we cannot escape the fate imposed upon us. I was born a butterfly and I shall die one. I've fought the idea for years, and I have been conquered. So I shall go East and pass the time as well as I may until the end. If you are anywhere near when "it" occurs, send me a few violets in memory of those you have always kept on the rehearsal table.' Soon after her arrival in the East came her tragic death, so that it was not very long before I had to send the flowers."

Laura Don's true name was Anna Laura Fish. She was the first wife of the theatrical agent and manager Thomas B. McDonough. She afterward married a photographer, resident in Troy, New York, whose name I have forgotten. She lived for





**DAVID BELASCO AS KING LOUIS THE ELEVENTH**

Photograph by Houseworth, San Francisco.  
Original loaned by Mrs. David Belasco.



DAVID BELASCO AS KING LOUIS THE ELEVENTH











about six years after Belasco met her. On September 6, 1882, at the Standard Theatre, New York, she produced a play called "A Daughter of the Nile," written by herself, and appeared in it as a star. The principal person in it, a female named *Egypt*, is supposed to be of Egyptian origin: the subject, however, is American and modern. Miss Don never acted *Cleopatra*. She died, suddenly, at Greenwich, New York, February 10, 1886.

Sheridan's engagement at the Baldwin terminated December 28, and the next night the well-known English melodrama of "The World," by Paul Meritt, Henry Pettitt, and Augustus Harris, was performed there, for the first time in America. (Several years later, after Belasco had become established in New York, he was employed by Charles Frohman to make a revival of this play, which had been introduced to our Stage under his direction, in New Orleans.) On January 10, 1881, a drama called "The Eviction," depicting some aspects of the landlord and tenant disturbances then rife in Ireland, was brought out and filled one week. On January 17 it was succeeded by a play called "Wedded by Fate," the joint work of Edward Captain Field and Henry B. McDowell, son of General Irvin McDowell. The younger McDowell, possessed of wealth, proposed, through Belasco, to subsidize a



production of their play in order to get it before the public, and Maguire, pressed for money, eagerly assented to that arrangement. Belasco, recalling the incident of bringing forth "Wedded by Fate" and the peculiarities of its principal author, writes thus:

"An instance of the casual devotee of the Theatre was young McDowell, son of the famous Union general. Our first interview was most amusing. I remember how he stammered: 'I s-s-should l-l-like to b-be an a-a-a-actor,' he said, with difficulty. He also, in common with many others, believed that he could write a successful play and agreed that if I produced something of his very own he would finance it and would guarantee a certain bonus. His first effort—I forget the name of it—cost him a trifle of a fortune, but inasmuch as it was a local play by a local author people flocked to see it. When I met him years afterwards in New York he was still obsessed by the theatrical bee, from which he never recovered. With Franklin Sargent he opened The Theatre of Arts and Letters and lost a fortune. If I had not been, at the time, under contract to the Lyceum Theatre I should have joined McDowell in that undertaking."

The period from January to July, 1881, exhibits nothing of particular moment concerning Belasco, though, as usual, he was hard at work throughout it. "Wedded by Fate" gave place to a revival, February 1, of Daly's version of "Leah the Forsaken," made to introduce to the Stage a novice, Miss Clara Stuart, who paid for the privilege of appearing and whose



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money, like that of the extravagant McDowell, was welcome to the distressed Maguire. Beginning on February 9, George Darrell, an actor from Australia, —with whom Belasco had been associated in conjunction with Laura Alberta, at Grey's Opera House, in 1873,—acted at the Baldwin for several weeks. During McDowell's season and for several weeks subsequent thereto part of the Baldwin stock company performed in towns of the interior,—Belasco dividing his time between San Francisco, where he assisted Darrell, and the Baldwin company, "on the road." Darrell opened in "Back from the Grave," a play dealing with the important, neglected, and often misrepresented subject of spiritualism (that actor was, or, at least, bore the reputation of being, a hypnotist and a student of occult matters). This was followed on the 21st by "Four Fates," and, on the 25th, by "Transported for Life." John P. Smith and William A. Mestayer played at the Baldwin for three weeks, beginning April 11, in "The Tourists in a Pullman Palace Car"; Kate Claxton, supported by Charles Stevenson and making her first appearance in San Francisco, presented "The Two Orphans" there for two weeks, opening on May 9; and the company of Jarrett & Rice, in "Fun on the Bristol," played there from May 30 to June 9, after which date the theatre was closed until July 4. It



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was then reopened, under the temporary management of J. H. Young, with A. D. Bradley as stage manager, and a few performances of "Emancipation" were given by The Pierreponts. Belasco, however, appears to have been occupied chiefly with his own affairs from April to July.

### "LA BELLE RUSSE."

Even before Belasco had been reinstalled as stage manager at the Baldwin Theatre he had resumed planning another campaign of adventure to gain acceptance and position in New York, and that purpose was ever present in his mind during the year that followed his return from the Eastern venture with the Hernes in "Hearts of Oak." He had set his heart on a success in the leading theatre of the country, Wallack's, and he resolutely addressed himself to its achievement. Maguire had come to depend more and more on Belasco, in the labor of keeping the Baldwin Theatre open and solvent, and to him the ambitious dramatist presently turned with his plans for a play to be called "La Belle Russe." "I felt that I had a play which would suit Wallack's company," he said, "and that, if I could get some of his actors to appear in it, Wallack would soon hear of it, and the task of getting a New York hearing would be much simplified. Jeffreys-Lewis





Photographs by Saronv.

**MARY JEFFREYS-LEWIS**

About 1881, when they acted in Belasco's "La Belle Russe"



Belasco's Collection.

**OSMOND TEARLE**







was then in San Francisco, and I stipulated with Maguire that he should engage her for me, and also Osmond Tearle and Gerald Eyre, from Wallack's; John Jennings, from the Union Square, and Clara Walters, who was then acting in Salt Lake City." Maguire agreed to do this, the engagements were made, and Belasco earnestly addressed himself to the completion of his play, which was accomplished in six weeks. Meantime Tearle ended his engagement in New York (at Wallack's Theatre, July 2) and, with other members of the Wallack company, went at once to San Francisco, where rehearsals of the new play were immediately begun.

Belasco's "La Belle Russe" was originally entitled "Violette." He chanced to read the phrase "la belle Russe" on a wind-blown fragment of newspaper, was pleased by it, and adopted it as a better title. The play is a fabric of theatrically effective but incredible situations, and it is founded on two other plays, well known to him,—both of them having been acted in San Francisco, under his management,—namely, "Forget Me Not," by Herman Merivale and Charles Groves, and "The New Magdalen," by Wilkie Collins: the version produced under Belasco's direction was a piratical one made by James H. LeRoy. *La belle Russe* is a beautiful but vicious Englishwoman, named *Beatrice Glan-*



*dore*, daughter of a clergyman. She has sunk, by a facile process of social decline, until she has become a decoy for a gambling house, where, pretending to be a Russian, she is known to its frequenters by the sobriquet which gives the play its name. She has a virtuous twin sister, *Geraldine*, so like her in appearance that they are, practically, indistinguishable. *La belle Russe* has infatuated a young Englishman, *Captain Brand* (known at the time by the name of *Captain Jules Clopin*), with whom she has lived, whom she has robbed, abandoned, and finally shot, believing herself to have killed him. *Geraldine*, meantime, has married a young Englishman of great expectations, *Sir Philip Calthorpe*, who is repudiated by his mother and other relatives because of his marriage, whereupon, in financial straits, though represented as loving his wife, *Calthorpe* deserts her, enlists in the Army, and disappears.

After the lapse of a considerable period, *Calthorpe* being reported as dead, *Lady Elizabeth Calthorpe*, his mother, experiences a change of heart, and advertises for information about his widow. *Beatrice*, *la belle Russe*, poor and resident in Italy, hears of this inquiry and, believing her twin sister to be dead, determines to present herself in the assumed person of *Geraldine*, as the widow of *Calthorpe*, and thus to obtain for herself and her young daughter (of



whom *Brand* is the father) a luxurious home and an enviable social station. In this fraud she partially succeeds, being accepted as *Calthorpe's* widow by both *Lady Elizabeth* and her family lawyer, *Monroe Quilton*, who evince a confiding acquiescence singularly characteristic of proud old English aristocrats and their astute legal advisers. Almost in the moment of her success, however, *Sir Philip* having come from Australia, she finds herself installed not as his widow but as his wife,—and also she finds that *Sir Philip* is accompanied by her former companion, *Captain Brand*, those wanderers having met in Australian wilds and become close friends. *Philip* is sure she is his wife and gladly accepts her as such. *Brand*, on the contrary, promptly identifies the spurious *Geraldine* as *Beatrice* and, privately, demands that she abandon her fraudulent position. This she refuses to do, defying *Brand* to oust her from the newly acquired affections of *Calthorpe* and his mother,—and thus, practically, the situation is created wherein *Stéphanie de Mohrivart* defies *Sir Horace Welby*, in the play of “Forget Me Not.” *Beatrice*, having made an unsuccessful attempt to poison *Brand*, in order to remove all obstacles and maintain her place, is finally defeated and driven to confession and surrender when that inexorable antagonist reveals to her not



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an avenging Corsican (the dread apparition which overwhelms *Stéphanie*), but the approaching figure of her twin sister, the true *Geraldine* and the actual wife of *Calthorpe*,—who, also, is conveniently resurrected for the family reunion.

Aside from the impossibility of most of these occurrences,—a defect which is measurably lessened by Belasco's deft treatment of them,—and also from the blemish of intricacy in the substructure of the plot, "*La Belle Russe*" is an effective play, of the society-melodrama order,—the action of it being free and cumulative, the characters well drawn, and the interest sustained. It contains an interesting exposition of monstrous feminine wickedness, and stimulates thought upon the infatuation that can be caused by seductive physical beauty, and it suggests the singular spectacle of baffled depravity stumbling among its attempted self-justifications,—*Beatrice*, of course, entering various verbal pleas in extenuation which, accepted, would establish her as a victim of ruthless society instead of her own unbridled tendencies. The play possesses, likewise, the practical advantages of a small cast, implicating only nine persons and requiring for its display only three simple sets of scenery. The San Francisco production of it was abundantly successful, Miss Jeffreys-Lewis, who had previously won high praise



by performances of *Stéphanie de Mohrivar*, and also of the *Countess Zicka*, in "Diplomacy," being specially commended, one observer declaring that, though her performances of those parts were good examples of the acting required in the tense dramatic situations of a duel of keen wits, "her *Geraldine* [*Beatrice*] *Glandore* is more varied, more vivid, more intense, and generally powerful. Her mobile face took on every shade of expression that the human face can wear, and perhaps not the least natural was the open, artless, sunny countenance which quickly won *Sir Philip's* love." Tearle as *Captain Brand* and Gerald Eyre as *Calthorpe* were almost equally admired, and the play had a prosperous career of two weeks,—which, in San Francisco at that time, was substantial testimony to its popularity. Belasco writes this account of the production:

"San Francisco, like all other cities, was not over-anxious to welcome the product of one of her sons. There was much more drawing power in something of foreign authorship. . . . Knowing that the critics would welcome anything from France, and knowing how hypercritical some of the writers of the press were becoming of my own efforts, 'La Belle Russe' was announced as being by a French author. The programme for the opening announced that the drama was from the French. However, Maguire had posters ready to placard the town, were 'La Belle Russe' a success. This



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time the name of David Belasco was blazoned forth in the blackest type. And it all worked as I had devised. The play met with instant success, and on the morning after, when the critics had come out in columns of praise for such technique as the French usually showed, on their downward travel to the offices they were faced with the startling announcement that the anonymous author was none other than David Belasco."

The first presentment of "La Belle Russe" was made at the Baldwin Theatre, to mark "the inauguration of the regular dramatic season" there, on July 18, 1881. During the rehearsals of it Tearle had several times spoken to Belasco, signifying doubt about the "French origin" of the play and, finally, remarking that Belasco showed an astonishing familiarity with every word and detail of the drama. "Well, whatever you may think," Belasco assured him, "please believe *you are mistaken* and say nothing about it—just now." His wishes were observed: one contemporary comment on the day before its production remarks that "of the play little seems to be known. It is said to resemble 'Forget Me Not.' The actors say it is strong." The first announcement I have been able to find of the actual authorship is in a newspaper of July 26, 1881, where it is advertised as "The strongest play of modern times, 'La Belle Russe,' by D. Belasco, author of 'Hearts of Oak.'" After all question of the accept-



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ance of his play was ended and his authorship acknowledged Belasco asked Tearle to inform Lester Wallack about it, "if he thought well enough of the play to feel justified in doing so." "Oh," answered Tearle, "I've done that long ago; I telegraphed to him after the first performance: it will be just the thing for Rose Coghlan." Thus Belasco felt he was in a fair way to accomplish his purpose of securing a New York opening. This was the original cast of "La Belle Russe":

<i>Captain Dudley Brand</i> .....	Osmond Tearle.
<i>Sir Philip Calthorpe</i> .....	Gerald Eyre.
<i>Monroe Quilton, Esq.</i> .....	John W. Jennings.
<i>Rignold Henderson</i> (Supt. of Police) ..	E. H. Holden.
<i>Roberts</i> .....	J. McCormack.
<i>Barton</i> .....	Edgar Wilton.
<i>Beatrice Glandore (Geraldine)</i> .....	Jeffreys-Lewis.
<i>Lady Elizabeth Calthorpe</i> .....	Jean Clara Walters.
<i>Elise</i> .....	Edith Livingston.
<i>Little Beatrice</i> .....	Maude Adams.

### "THE STRANGLERS OF PARIS."

"La Belle Russe" received its final performance at the Baldwin Theatre on Saturday evening, July 30. On August 1 "Adolph Challet" was produced there, under Belasco's direction, and on August 8 a revival of "Diplomacy" was effected, Tearle acting *Henry Beauclerc*, Gerald Eyre *Julian*, and Miss



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Jeffreys-Lewis the *Countess Zicka*. It had been intended to divide the week between "Diplomacy" and "Camille," but "to my delight," Belasco said, "the former was strong enough to fill the whole week and I could give all the time to final preparation of my new play." That new play was a dramatic epitome of "The Stranglers of Paris" ("Les Étrangleurs de Paris"), by Adolphe Belot, for the production of which much effort had already been made. It was modestly announced by Maguire (who, I surmise, did not thereby greatly distress Belasco) as "The great dramatic event of the nineteenth century," and it was brought out on August 15. Belasco's name was not made known as that of the adapter. This play is, in fact, an extravagant and, in some respects, a repulsive sensation melodrama. The story relates some of the experiences of an intellectual pervert named *Jagon*, a huge hunchback, of remarkable muscular strength, especially in the digits, resident in Paris, and gaining a livelihood for himself and a cherished daughter (whom he keeps in ignorance of her actual relationship to himself) by the gentle art of strangling persons in order to rob them. A specially barbarous murder is committed by *Jagon* and an accomplice named *Lorenz*,—an ex-convict who has ingratiated himself with the daughter, *Mathilde*, and who marries her. *Jagon* and



an innocent man, *Blanchard*, are arrested, tried for this crime, and sentenced to transportation to New Caledonia. The convict-ship bearing them to that destination is wrecked and they escape together upon a raft and return to Paris. *Mathilde*, having discovered the criminality of her husband, frees her mind on that subject with such pungency that *Lorenz* is moved to practise upon her the professional dexterity learned from her revered father and promptly chokes her to death. *Jagon* arrives at this juncture, attended by police officers, denounces *Lorenz* to them as his actual accomplice in the crime for which *Blanchard* has been convicted with him, and then, in the manner of *Robert Macaire* in somewhat similar circumstances, being determined to escape the guillotine, leaps through a convenient window, thus giving the police an opportunity, which they improve, of shooting him to death. The play is immensely inferior to the story upon parts of which it is based, but it serves its purpose as a "shocker." The escape of the two convicts on the raft at sea provides an effective scene, not the less so because of its resemblance to a similar scene in the earlier melodrama of "The World": the expedient, however, was an old one long before "The World" was produced: it is employed with great skill and effect in Reade's fine novel of "The Simpleton." Belasco's mature

Read  
the  
play  
first!



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opinion of this play of his has been recorded in four words which cover the case: "What buncombe it was!" A notably good performance was given in it by Osmond Tearle as *Jagon*—a part which he expressed himself to the dramatist as delighted to undertake as a relief from acting the repressed "leads" to which he had for some time been restricted. It ran for two weeks. This was the original cast:

<i>Jagon</i> .....	Osmond Tearle.
<i>Joseph Blanchard</i> .....	Gerald Eyre.
<i>Robert de Meillant</i> .....	Joseph R. Grismer.
<i>Lorenz</i> .....	Max Freeman.
<i>Captain Jules Guérin</i> .....	Walter Leman.
<i>Mons. Claude</i> .....	A. D. Bradley.
<i>Bontout</i> .....	John W. Jennings.
<i>Papin</i> .....	Charles Norris.
<i>Dr. Fordien</i> .....	J. P. Wade.
<i>Mons. Vitel</i> .....	George McCormack.
<i>Mons. Xavier</i> .....	E. N. Thayer.
<i>Governor of Prison</i> .....	George Galloway.
<i>Longstalot</i> .....	R. G. Marsh.
<i>Grégoire</i> .....	Logan Paul.
<i>Jacquot</i> .....	G. L. May
<i>Cabassa</i> .....	John Torrence.
<i>Pierre</i> .....	G. McCord.
<i>Zalabut</i> .....	J. Higgins.
<i>Lamaxon</i> .....	Charles Robertson.
<i>Zorges</i> .....	G. Holden.
<i>Jacques</i> .....	S. Chapman.
<i>Commander of Prison Ship</i> .....	W. T. Day.
<i>First Lieutenant</i> .....	E. N. Neuman.



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*Second Lieutenant*.....E. Webster.  
*First Marine*.....J. Sherwood.  
*Mathilde*.....Jeffreys Lewis.  
*Jeanne Guerin*.....Ethel Arden.  
*Sophie Blanchard*.....Jean Clara Walters.  
*Zoë Lacassade*.....Mrs. Elizabeth Saunders.  
*La Grande Florine*.....Eva West.

"The Strangers" was superbly mounted, it delighted the public for which it was intended, and was played for two weeks, attracting large and enthusiastically demonstrative audiences.

### NEW YORK AGAIN.—"LA BELLE RUSSE" AT WALLACK'S.

Maguire, because he had produced Belasco's play of "La Belle Russe" at the Baldwin and had thereby profited, appears to have considered that also he had thereby acquired a property in it. To this claim the necessitous dramatist assented (making, I suppose, a virtue of necessity), giving Maguire a half-interest. Maguire then decreed that they should go to New York together, in order to place the play with Wallack, if that should prove the most expedient arrangement, or to place it with any other manager from whom it might be possible to exact higher payment. Belasco consented to negotiate with other managers and ascertain what terms might be offered, "even though," he said, "I had determined



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that none but Wallack should produce it." On September 25, 1881, they left San Francisco together and came to New York.

According to Belasco's statement to me, Augustin Daly wanted the play of "La Belle Russe" for Ada Rehan (to whom the central part would have been peculiarly unfitted), while A. M. Palmer wanted it for Miss Jeffreys-Lewis, at the Union Square, and John Stetson wanted it for Marie Prescott. Belasco had interviews with all of them, and with Wallack. His determination that Wallack should produce his play, if he possibly could arrange to have him do so, was intensified by the kindness of Wallack's manner toward the young author and by the strong impression made upon him by that actor's pictorial and winning personality. Maguire, meantime, consorted with Stetson, a person naturally congenial to him, and presently became insistent that the play should be intrusted to that manager. "After I had read the play to Stetson in his office (which I did very unwillingly)," Belasco told me, "the two of them threatened me with all sorts of consequences if I did not turn the manuscript over to Stetson, and I really believe they would have taken it from me by force if I had not buttoned it under my coat and bolted out of the office!" This pair of pilgrims had then been for some time in New York, and



Maguire, by agreement, had been paying Belasco's living expenses; now, by way of practical intimation that his will must prevail and the play be relinquished to Stetson, he stopped doing so. This left Belasco in a familiar but not the less painful plight—stranded—and it also incensed him against Maguire.

At this juncture, when unfortunately he was impecunious, indignant, and excited, he received a visit from Maguire's nephew, Mr. Frank L. Goodwin, with whom he had already negotiated relative to "La Belle Russe," and whom he now supposed to have come to him as Wallack's representative. To this person he imprudently made known his quarrel with Maguire, and hastily inquired, "What will you give me for the play?" "Fifteen hundred dollars, cash," Goodwin answered, and then, observing that he hesitated, "and a return ticket to San Francisco, and \$100 more for your expenses." "How soon can I have the money?" Belasco rejoined. "In half an hour." "Then I'll take it"—and he did, selling his play, outright, not, as he supposed, to Wallack, but to Goodwin, for \$1,600 cash and a railroad ticket home! He received the money the same afternoon and left that night for San Francisco. When the play was produced at Wallack's it was announced as "By arrangement with Mr. F. L. Goodwin, the pro-



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duction of a new and powerful drama by David Belasco, Esq." Wallack paid Goodwin a high price for the play, which, since then, has been successfully acted throughout the English-speaking world, and, later, when told of the facts of the sale, expressed his profound regret and dissatisfaction that Belasco had not dealt directly with him. Fifty times the amount of money that Belasco received for "La Belle Russe" would have been more like a fair payment for it than the sum he actually received. "I did not particularly care what Maguire might do," Belasco told me, "when he heard about the matter. I felt that I could get along much better without him than he could without me (I always did for Maguire far more than ever I got paid for!), but he cooled off after he got home, and I resumed work, for a little while, at the Baldwin."

### AN OPINION BY BRONSON HOWARD.—WALLACK IN THE THIRTIETH STREET HOUSE.

Belasco's published recollections of the circumstances of Wallack's removal from the Thirteenth Street house and of the importance to that manager of his presentation of "La Belle Russe" require revision to make them accurate. He says:

"The stage history of 'La Belle Russe' is interesting. Wallack had opened his theatre with 'Money,' which had



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been followed by a play by Pinero. He had met with failure all along the road, and his heart began to question whether he was right in forsaking his old ground on Thirteenth Street and in moving so far up-town. 'La Belle Russe,' put on hurriedly, as a last forlorn hope, retrieved his fortunes. It called a spade a spade and did not show any reticence, the papers declared, and they flayed it as hard as ever they could. There was one exception, and that was Edward A. Dithmar, of 'The New York Times.' He said it was a new era among plays, and, although he was not a prophet, he put his finger on the elements that achieved success, and this was long before the day of 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.' Bronson Howard, at the height of his success, declared, in a public lecture, that it was a model of construction, and confessed that he had already seen it seventeen times, each evening discovering some new technical excellence in it. I do not want to appear boastful; the facts of the theatre are no longer personal after they have been made known to the public."

Bronson Howard was a man of talent, though his plays conclusively show that it was not of a high order and that his command of technical resource in dramatic construction was not remarkable: he may have required seventeen inspections of the drama in order to perceive its many practical merits as an histrionic vehicle: most experienced observers could, and did, discern them at one view. Belasco's statements with regard to Wallack, above quoted, are not correct. Wallack did not open his Thirtieth Street theatre with "Money": he opened it, January



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4, 1882, with "The School for Scandal": "Money" was not acted at that theatre till March 23, 1888,—though a play by A. W. Pinero, entitled "The Money Spinner," was the second acted there, January 21, 1882. Wallack had not "met with failure all along the road." He closed his theatre at Thirteenth Street with a presentation, under the management of Samuel Colville, of the English melodrama of "The World," which ran there from April 11 to July 2, 1881, receiving eighty-four performances, and which gained gross receipts to the extent of about \$65,000 (at the time, when prices were about half what they are now, an extraordinary profit): he produced another English melodrama, called "Youth," at his new theatre, February 20, 1882, and this play ran till May 6: "La Belle Russe" was produced by Wallack on May 8, and it ran till the close of the season, June 28. The presentment of it there was a notably handsome one and was distinctly successful. Rose Coghlan was specially excellent in her evincement of agonizing apprehension beneath a forced assumption of calm, and by the denoted prevalence of an indomitable will over mental terror. This was the cast at Wallack's:

<i>Captain Dudley Brand</i> .....	Osmond Tearle.
<i>Sir Philip Calthorpe</i> .....	Gerald Eyre.
<i>Monroe Quilton, Esq.</i> .....	John Gilbert.



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<i>Roberts</i> .....	C. E. Edwin.
<i>Barton</i> .....	H. Holliday.
<i>Beatrice (Geraldine)</i> .....	Rose Coghlan.
<i>Lady Elizabeth Calthorpe</i> .....	Mme. Ponisi.
<i>Little Beatrice</i> .....	Mabel Stephenson.
<i>Agnes</i> .....	Celia Edgerton.

Belasco left New York in the latter part of December, 1881, and he arrived in San Francisco on Christmas Day. "Chispa," by Clay M. Greene and Slason Thompson, was produced at the Baldwin Theatre on December 26 and it ran there for two weeks,—in the course of which Maguire returned home; the differences between him and Belasco were composed, and the latter was presently reinstalled in his familiar place at the Baldwin. On January 16, 1882, acting *Matthias*, in "The Bells," W. E. Sheridan began a season there which lasted for seven weeks, during which he revived "Richelieu," "Othello," "Hamlet," and other plays of the legitimate repertory which he had previously presented in San Francisco (November-December, 1800), and also "King John" and "The Fool's Revenge." The last-named tragedy was brought out on March 3, the first performance of it being given for the benefit of Belasco's old friend and teacher, Mrs. "Nelly" Holbrook.



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### BELASCO AND HIS "THE CURSE OF CAIN."

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Sheridan's season terminated on March 5, and, on the 7th, occurred the first performance of a new play constructed, while that season lasted, by Belasco in collaboration with the excellent and much respected Peter Robertson (1847-1911), long dramatic critic of "The San Francisco Chronicle." It was called "The Curse of Cain," and its more active author has written of it as follows:

"Strange as it may appear, *Cain* was my hero. *Abel* had never appealed to me, any more than his forebears, in the garden of the bright flaming sword, whence the apple-eating Eve had been so forcibly ejected. 'The Curse of Cain' in embryo was a simple trifle of an allegory, which afterwards developed into a four-act drama with prologue and epilogue. And now that I look back upon it I think it was somewhat remarkable for strange innovations to the stage of that day. For the first time realistic thunderstorms and lightning effects were introduced, more naturally than anything that had gone before. I do not wish to pooh-pooh modern inventions, double stages, and all the paraphernalia of the latter-day drama, but I do contend that we could not have been outdone."

It will not, I think, appear "strange" to most persons that to Belasco, as a dramatist, the character of Cain should be more attractive than that of Abel. It is, I know, sometimes asserted that evil is merely the absence of good and a passive state. But that



assertion is untrue. *Why* evil should exist at all is a mystery. But that it does exist and that, existing, it is a positive, active force which supplies the propulsive dramatic movement of most great representative plays,—of “Othello,” “Hamlet,” “King Richard III.,” and “Macbeth,” for example,—is obvious. Many of the great poets have felt this and exhibited it in their poetry. *Mephistopheles* is the dominant figure and the animating impulse of Goethe’s “Faust” and of Bailey’s “Festus,” and that is true, likewise, of *Satan*, in Milton’s “Paradise Lost.” Cain is the exponent of evil in the Bible narrative, the active, dramatic figure—and Cain, not Abel, accordingly engaged the attention of Byron, in one of his greatest poems, and of Coleridge, in a fragment on the same subject. Belasco’s declared preference, as a dramatist, seems to me to be an inevitable one. There is not, however, much relevancy in the expression of it as regards his play of “The Curse of Cain.” That fabric does not relate to the Bible narrative: it is a melodrama, of the period in which it was written, which tells, in an artificial but momentarily effective and diverting manner, a conventional tale of good and evil in conflict,—of crime long unpunished and honor much abused; of prosperous villainy and persecuted innocence borne down under a false accusation of



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murder; of harsh suffering in gypsy camps and prison cells, and, finally, of the vindication of virtue and retributive justice overtaking the transgressor. It was avowedly fashioned on the model of such earlier plays as "The World" (which Belasco had successfully set upon the stage fourteen months before), "The Lights o' London," "Mankind" and "Youth," and it was devised for the purpose of making lavish scenic display and startling theatrical effects, in the hope of winning back public support for the Baldwin. That purpose though not that hope was fulfilled, all contemporary commentators, in effect, agreeing with the published declaration that "never before in San Francisco has there been such a liberal and beautiful display of scenery as that provided for this play." "The Curse of Cain" was divided into seven acts, all of which were richly framed, and four of which,—Waterloo Bridge, London, during a snowstorm; a Gypsy Camp, in rural England; a Ruined Abbey, and "the Whirlpool Lighthouse,"—were affirmed "marvels of stage painting and effect." In the scene of the Gypsy Camp Belasco indulged to the full his liking for literalism,—providing for the public edification a braying donkey, neighing horses, cackling hens, crowing cocks, quacking ducks, and a rooting, grunting pig. In the Lighthouse Scene, as one account



relates, having assembled his *dramatis personæ* for the final curtain by the novel yet simple expedient of "washing them all up from the ocean," after a shipwreck, like flotsam, he introduced a frantic struggle between the villain and the hero, beginning on the wave-beaten rocks, conducted up a spiral stairway within the lighthouse and intermittently visible through the windows thereof, and terminating in the fall of the villain from the pinnacle of that edifice to a watery grave,—with which fitting demise, and the union of lovers, the spectacle drew sweetly to a close. "The critics," writes Belasco, "had plenty of fun with the absurdities of the piece (which hardly needed to be pointed out), and I had many a good laugh at it myself; but, for all that, it *was* the most elaborate scenic production of the kind ever made in the West, and the people who came to see it went wild over it. The only trouble was not enough of 'em could be induced to come!"

"The Curse of Cain" was acted from March 7 to 18, except on the evenings of the 8th and 15th, when Frederick Haase acted at the Baldwin. J. B. Dickson, of Brooks & Dickson, who saw the play there, purchased the right to produce it in the East, in English, and Gustav Amberg (then in San Francisco as manager of the Geistinger Opera Company) arranged to bring out a German version of it at the



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Thalia Theater, New York,—but I have not found that either of those managers ever presented it. A fragmentary record of the original cast, which is all that diligent research has discovered, shows Mrs. Saunders and Ada D'Aves as members of the company and signifies that the chief characters were allotted thus:

<i>Sir Rupert Treloar</i> .....	Joseph R. Grismer.
<i>Ashcroft</i> .....	Harry Colton.
<i>Tom Gray, "The Idiot"</i> .....	George Osborne.
<i>Joan Gray</i> .....	Jean Clara Walters.
<i>Alice Gray</i> .....	Phœbe Davis.

On March 15 Osborne superseded Colton as *Ashcroft*,—his place, as *Tom Gray*, being taken by Joseph W. Francœur.

### THE PASSING OF MAGUIRE.

Maguire's control of the Baldwin Theatre and Belasco's career in San Francisco were now drawing toward an end. The Geistinger Opera Company came to the Baldwin for a few days, when "The Curse of Cain" was withdrawn: "The Great Divorce Case" was acted there March 30: then came Haase, in "Hamlet," "The Gamester," and other old plays, which were performed by him "to a beggarly array of empty benches": and, on April 11, the Italian tragedian Ernesto Rossi (1829-1896)





Photograph by (Houseman?).

Belasco's Collection.

**THOMAS MAGUIRE**







emerged in his supremely repulsive perversion of Shakespeare's *Othello*: Rossi acted in association with Louise Muldener and he played at the Baldwin for one week,—closing with “Edmund Kean.” Attendance throughout his engagement was paltry—the treasury was empty—neither Baldwin nor anybody else would advance more money to Maguire—and the end had come. To Belasco it came as a relief. “The last year or so at the Baldwin,” he has declared to me, “was a good deal of a nightmare. Although Maguire and I had our differences, I liked him, I pitied him, and I stuck to him till the end. But my salary and my royalties were often unpaid: we had much trouble with our actors, so that sometimes I had to bring in amateurs who wanted experience and would play for nothing, or, sometimes, even pay for an opportunity to go on! I not only was stage manager, but I painted scenery, played parts when we were left in the lurch, helped in the front of the house, attended to the advertising, and even borrowed money for Maguire, whenever I could. But the Rossi engagement was the last straw. Baldwin's lawyer notified Maguire that the theatre was up for lease—and I was glad when it was all over.”



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### BELASCO AND GUSTAVE FROHMAN.—THEY REVIVE "THE OCTOROON."

Nobody, however, seems to have been eager to rush in where so many others had recently failed, and the Baldwin, except for a couple of benefits (the first, a performance of "Chispa," May 18, given for Phoebe Davis, under direction of J. R. Grismer; the second, given May 27, a revival of "The New Magdalen," for the public favorite Mrs. Judah), remained closed for about two months. During that period Gustave Frohman, the eldest of three brothers influentially associated with the American Stage, came to San Francisco, as representative of the proprietors of the New York Madison Square Theatre, in charge of a company headed by Charles Walter Couldock and Effie Ellsler, presenting "Hazel Kirke." With Gustave Frohman Belasco immediately formed a friendly acquaintance which vitally affected his subsequent career. "Hazel Kirke" was brought forward at the California Theatre on May 30—and even before that presentment had been made Belasco had suggested to Frohman another venture. This was a "sensation revival" of the old play of "The Octoroon." Callender's Colored Minstrels had just concluded an engagement at Emerson's Standard Theatre, and it was part of Belasco's scheme to employ that negro company and



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make use of it as auxiliary to performance of Boucicault's play. Gustave Frohman acceded to Belasco's suggestion, arranged for the proposed appearance of Callender's Minstrels, leased the Baldwin Theatre, and there revived "The Octoroon," on June 12, at low prices,—twenty-five to seventy-five cents. This shrewdly conceived enterprise was, because of Belasco's felicitous treatment of old material and his skilful direction of the players, an instant popular success. A contemporaneous commentator writes about it as follows:

"The present management has engaged the best professional talent the city affords, and has put it under the direction of a stage manager who can make the most of it. . . . Without a single strong feature in the cast, with possibly the exception of the *Wah-no-tee* of George Osborne, there were effects introduced which give more than their ordinary interest to the performance. The clever pen of Mr. Belasco had evidently elaborated the auction scenes, and the scene in which *Salem Scudder* saves the *Indian* from the mob. . . ."

### This was the cast:

<i>Jacob McCloskey</i> .....	Harry Colton.
<i>Salem Scudder</i> .....	Edward Marble.
<i>Wah-no-tee</i> .....	George Osborne.
<i>George Peyton</i> .....	W. T. Doyle.
" <i>Uncle</i> " <i>Pete</i> .....	Edward Barrett.
<i>Mr. Sunnyside</i> .....	R. G. Marsh.
<i>Lafouche</i> .....	Mr. Foster.



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<i>Paul</i> .....	Kitty Belmour.
<i>Ratts</i> .....	Joseph W. Francœur.
<i>Colonel Poindexter</i> .....	Thomas Gossman.
<i>Julius Thibodeaux</i> .....	Logan Paul.
<i>Judge Caillou</i> .....	George Galloway.
<i>Jackson</i> .....	George Stevens.
<i>Solon</i> .....	Mr. McIntosh.
<i>Zoe, the Octoroon</i> .....	Mrs. F. M. Bates.
<i>Dora Sunnyside</i> .....	Abbie Pierce.
<i>Mrs. Peyton</i> .....	Jean Clara Walters.
<i>Grace</i> .....	Lillie Owen.
<i>Dido</i> .....	Mrs. Weston.
<i>Minnie</i> .....	Kate Foust.

In making this revival of "The Octoroon" Belasco employed the "altered and retouched" version of it, prepared by him, which had been acted under his direction at the Baldwin July 8, 1878,—still further varying and expanding several scenes of the original. The most popular variety features, dances, "specialties," and songs of the minstrel show were deftly interwoven with the fabric of the drama, being utilized with pleasing effect in an elaborate representation of the slave quarters by moonlight, and in the first and fourth scenes of the Last Act: in the latter the slaves were shown, slowly making their way homeward, at evening, through the cotton fields, singing as they went, and the result was extraordinarily picturesque and impressive. More than 150 persons, besides the actors of the chief char-



acters, participated in the performance, and the slave sale and the burning of the river steamboat *Magnolia* were portrayed with notable semblance of actuality. Writing to me, Belasco says: "I used a panorama, painted on several hundred yards of canvas, and I introduced drops, changing scenes in the twinkling of an eye, showing, alternately and in quick succession, pursued and pursuer,—*Jacob McCloskey* and the *Indian*,—making their way through the canebrake and swamp, and ending with the life and death struggle and the killing of *McCloskey*. I must say the people were wildly enthusiastic and I was proud of the whole production. I thought the acting very good."

"AMERICAN BORN."

"The Octoroon" was played for two weeks and then, June 26, gave place to "Caryswold," an inconsequential play which Belasco tinkered,—introducing into it a "Fire Scene, showing the destruction of a Mad-House," suggested by the terrible passage in Reade's "Hard Cash," descriptive of the burning of an asylum for the insane and the escape of *Alfred Hardy*. Ada Ward, an English actress, who came from Australia, acted the principal part in it.

Gustave Frohman's lease of the Baldwin Theatre expired on July 1, and on the 3rd Jay Rial, having



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hired the house for a week, presented "Uncle Tom's Cabin" there. On July 10 occurred the last event of the first period of Belasco's theatrical life,—the presentment at the Baldwin of "American Born." Edward Marble, an actor who had come to San Francisco as a member of the "Hazel Kirke" company, was advertised as lessee of the theatre and the play was brought out under the auspices of Gustave Frohman. It was a free adaptation by Belasco of "British Born," by Paul Merritt and Henry Pettitt, and was a wild and whirling, spread-eagle, bugle-blowing melodrama, in which the heroine, at a climax of desperate adventure, saves her lover from being shot to death by Bolivian soldiers by wrapping him in a flag of the United States. Its production was chiefly remarkable for handsome scenic investiture and a really impressive portrayal of a volcano in furious eruption. This was the cast of "American Born":

### IN THE PROLOGUE.

<i>Laban Brood</i> .....	John W. Jennings.
<i>George Seymour</i> .....	Joseph R. Grismer.
<i>Fred Faggles</i> .....	John Dillon.
<i>John Hope</i> .....	A. D. Bradley.
<i>Captain Jabex Dolman</i> .....	M. A. Kennedy.
<i>Constable</i> .....	George H. McCormack.
<i>Messenger</i> .....	Edgar Wilton.





**DAVID BELASCO AS *UNCLE TOM*, IN  
"UNCLE TOM'S CABIN"**

Photograph by Houseworth, San Francisco.  
Original loaned by Mrs. David Belasco.



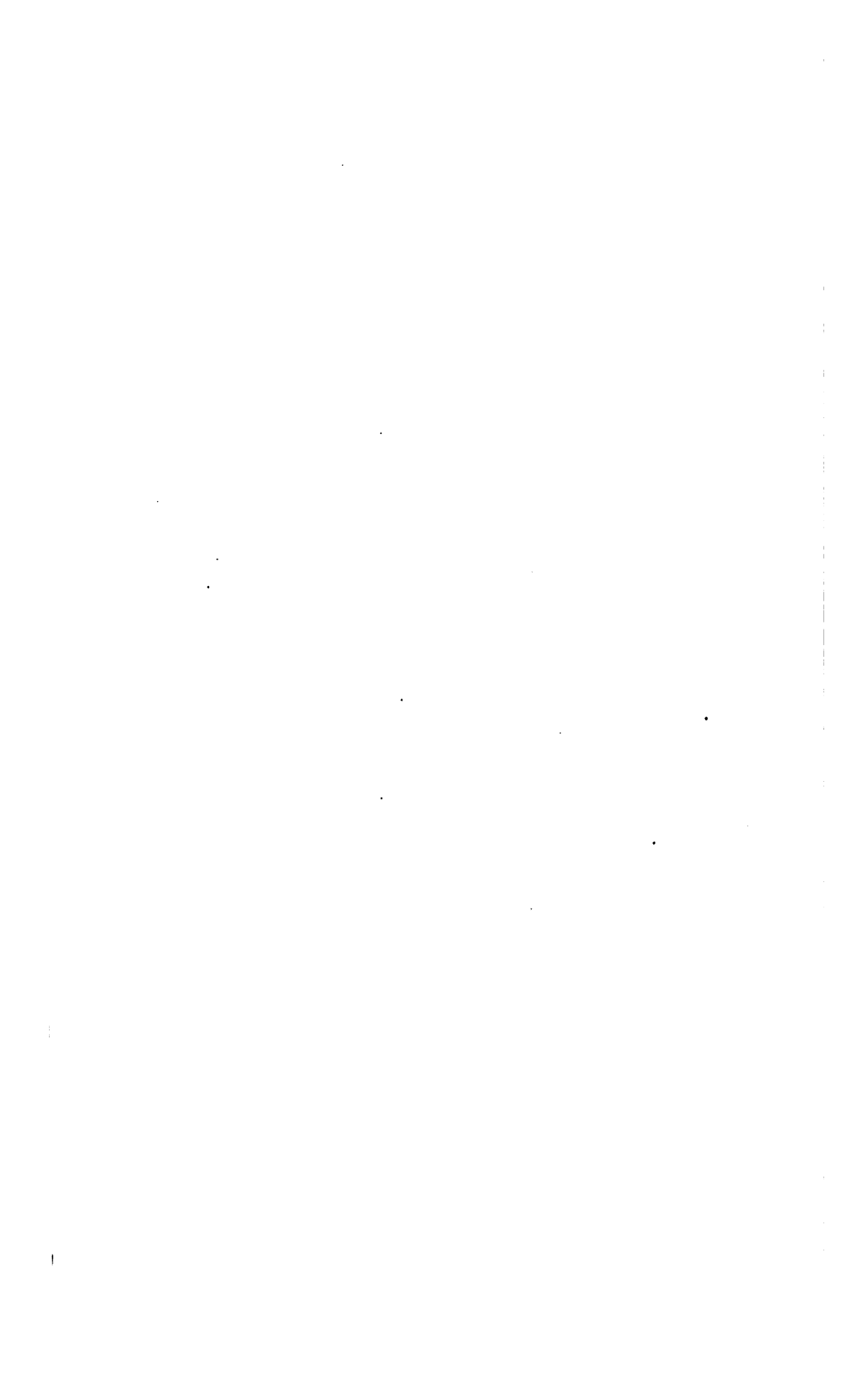
DAVID BELASCO AND UNCLE TOM IN  
UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.

THE END OF THE WORLD.











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*Mary Hope*.....Ada Ward.  
*Nancy Treat*.....Ada Gilman.

### IN THE DRAMA.

*Don Andre de Calderone*.....George Osborne.  
*John Hope*.....A. D. Bradley.  
*George Seymour*.....Joseph R. Grismer.  
*Fred Faggles*.....John Dillon.  
*Sylvester (alias Laban Brood)*.....John W. Jennings.  
*Juddle (alias Captain Dolman)*.....M. A. Kennedy.  
*Tom Morris*.....Joseph W. Francœur.  
*Jumbo*.....George H. McCormack.  
*Landro*.....Edgar Wilton.  
*Mary Hope*.....Ada Ward.  
*Nancy Treat*.....Ada Gilman.

### FIRST MEETING WITH CHARLES FROHMAN.

Belasco was, during one period of his life, closely allied to Charles Frohman. Later, after Frohman had, with others, formed the iniquitous Theatrical Syndicate, he was, for many years, resolutely and rightly, antagonistic to him. Age and change, however, sometimes wear out antagonisms, and those estranged friends were reconciled not long before Frohman's death in the Lusitania murder: the last production made by Frohman was a revival, at the Empire Theatre, New York, April 7, 1915, in association with Belasco, of "A Celebrated Case." The first meeting of those managers occurred in San Francisco, while Belasco was rehearsing "American



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Born." He has made this record of that significant incident:

"Charles Frohman came to San Francisco at the head of the Haverley Minstrels. Gustave Frohman told me he thought his brother and I should meet. The artists of the town had a rendezvous at a Rathskeller at the corner of Kearny and Sutter streets, where we were in the habit of gathering after the theatre. Gustave Frohman and I were at a table, when he exclaimed: 'There's my brother Charlie!' I looked at Charles, our eyes met. We bowed. That was our introduction. We never had a formal one, Charles Frohman and I; we just knew each other. . . . He came to see 'American Born,' was favorably impressed by it, and conceived the idea of forming a company and taking the play East. We selected Chicago as the best starting point for an Eastern tour and set busily to work to organize our company and arrange details of the business."

### EASTWARD, HO!

While Belasco was thus busily engaged with preparation for the presentment in Chicago of his drama of "American Born," a proposal was made to him by Daniel Frohman, business manager of the Madison Square Theatre, New York, through his brother, Gustave Frohman, that he should undertake, on trial, the stage management of that theatre. The opportunity thus offered was alluring, and, having ascertained that he might improve it without detriment to his purposed venture in Chicago,



Belasco determined to seek once more for the success in the metropolis of the country which had long been the chief object of his ambition. He accepted the proposal, and likewise he accepted an invitation to work his way eastward as stage manager of the [Gustave] Frohman Dramatic Company. That company, organized in San Francisco, included Ada Ward, "Virgie" Emily, Abbie Pierce, "Rellie" Davis, "Jennie" Lamont, Charles Wheatleigh, M. A. Kennedy, John Dillon, George Osborne, "Harry" Colton, W. F. Doyle, Joseph W. Francœur, Logan Paul, and Hawley Chapman. It left San Francisco, on or about July 18, 1882, to perform in towns and cities of Colorado, and on July 31 began an engagement at Denver, where it played for two weeks during the Industrial and Mining Exposition held in that city. The repertory comprised "The Octoroon," "East Lynne," "Mary Warner," "Our Boys," "Leah the Forsaken," "The Woman in Red," "Arrah-na-Pogue," and "American Born."

At, apparently, about the time when Maguire ceased to be potent in San Francisco theatrical affairs Belasco received a personal letter from F. F. Mackaye (himself an excellent stage manager and a severe judge of achievement in that vocation), which,—because it is representative of the advice of several friendly admirers in the same period, and



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because it had some influence on his decision to accept the Frohman proposals,—may appropriately be printed here:

(*F. F. Mackaye to David Belasco.*)

“Hotel, Pike’s Peak,

“Colorado (date? 1881-82?).

“My dear Belasco:—

“I fear that I hardly appreciated you fully while under your direction in San Francisco: but I think I have done so since we have been here, and my daily toil has placed me under the direction of Mr. S——. He seems a very clever man. Yet his lack of form, of constructive direction, is very much felt by one who has had the pleasure of being under your direction at the Baldwin. I sometimes wonder *why* you have stayed so long in the West. I know some people who have been there all their lives think it the greatest place in the world, but I am sure that if you were to go to New York, which is really the centre of art in the United States, your work would be more fully recognized and appreciated. I feel that a man of your progressive mood should not be content to remain on the outside of the world when you could just as well be in the middle of it. I am sure that your final efforts, or, rather, that your continuous efforts should be made in the city of New York, where you would be rightly appreciated.

“I wouldn’t say one word in disparagement of the people of San Francisco: they have treated me splendidly. But I tell you New York is the place, and I have had long experience. I began this profession in 1851, and you are the first director that I have met in that time and felt that he really loved the work he was doing—and we know very well that, however much a man may know about any art,





Photograph by Sarony.  
Reynolds Collection.

**F. F. MACKAYE**



Photograph by Bradley & Rolfsen, S. P.  
Courtesy of Mrs. Frohman Davidson.

**GUSTAVE FROHMAN**







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unless he loves the work he is doing there is always a lack of interest which the public is sure to detect. Don't for one moment think that I try to flatter you by these remarks. I say these things because I love the Art of Acting very much, and I have found your love and sympathy for it so great that I dearly and sincerely admire your work. Long may you live to continue in the labor which is always good for the art and instructive for the public!

"With very sincere regards, and hoping to see you again, I am,

"Yours very sincerely,

"F. F. Mackaye."

\* \* \* \* \*

### A RETROSPECT.

Belasco was only twenty-nine years old when he brought his career in San Francisco to an end and embarked on the venture which was at last to establish him in the Theatre of New York. (He had been eleven years on the stage.) A brief retrospect and summary of his early achievement will be useful here. Throughout his life he had enjoyed the blessing of family affection, admiration, and sympathy, and he had received respectable schooling. Otherwise, his experience had been one of unrelenting, strenuous, often anxious, toil; frequent hardship, injustice, disappointment,—in short, a painfully laborious struggle. (He had been, in childhood, a circus rider, a newsboy, a messenger, a willing, help-



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ful drudge, a shopboy in a cigar factory and in a bookstore; then, as he grew older, a scribbler for the newspapers, a salesman of haberdashery, an itinerant peddler, a strolling player, a reader and reciter, a mimic, a theatrical manager, an agent "in advance" of theatrical companies, a teacher of acting, a scene painter, a stage manager, and a playwright. ) He had seen much of the best acting of his period and had been intimately associated with many leaders of the Stage,—sometimes as student and assistant, sometimes as adviser and director. He had acted, in all sorts of circumstances and in all sorts of places, more than 170 parts,—ranging from mere bits to characters of the highest and most exacting order. ( He had altered, adapted, rewritten, or written more than 100 plays and he had been the responsible director in the production of more than three times that number. A catalogue is seldom interesting reading; nevertheless, students of the Theatre and of Belasco's extraordinary career will do well to ponder the following significant though incomplete schedule of the plays set upon the stage under his direction prior to midsummer, 1882:

"Agnes."

"Aladdin No. 2; or, The  
Wonderful Scamp."

"Alixé."

"Alphonse."

"American Born."

"Amy Robsart."

"Apostate," "The.



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- |                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| "Arrah-na-Pogue."             | "Divorce."                 |
| "Article 47."                 | Doll Master," "The.        |
| Assommoir," "L'.              | "Dombey & Son."            |
| "As You Like It."             | "Don Cæsar de Bazan."      |
| "Aurora Floyd."               | "Donna Diana."             |
| Ballad Monger," "The.         | "Dora."                    |
| Belle Russe," "La.            | Duke's Motto," "The.       |
| Bells," "The.                 | "East Lynne."              |
| "Belphegor."                  | "Edmund Kean."             |
| "Bianca."                     | "Elizabeth, Queen of Eng-  |
| "Black-Ey'd Susan."           | land."                     |
| "Bleak House."                | Enchantress," "The.        |
| "Blow for Blow."              | "Enoch Arden."             |
| Bold Stroke for a Hus-        | Eviction," "The.           |
| band," "A.                    | "False Shame."             |
| Bull in a China Shop," "A.    | "Fanchette."               |
| "Camille."                    | Fast Family," "A.          |
| "Caste."                      | "Fire-Fly."                |
| Celebrated Case," "A.         | Fool of the Family," "The. |
| "Checkmate."                  | Fool's Revenge," "The.     |
| "Cherry and Fair Star."       | "Forget Me Not."           |
| Child of the Regiment," "The. | Forty Thieves," "The.      |
| "Clouds and Sunshine."        | French Spy," "The.         |
| "Colleen Bawn."               | "Frou-Frou."               |
| Corsican Brothers," "The.     | Gamester," "The.           |
| "Court and Stage."            | "Green Bushes."            |
| Cricket on the Hearth," "The. | Green Lanes of England,"   |
| Curse of Cain," "The.         | "The.                      |
| "Damon and Pythias."          | "Guy Mannering."           |
| "David Copperfield."          | "Hamlet."                  |
| Dead Heart," "The.            | Happy Pair," "A.           |
| "Dearer than Life."           | "Hearts of Oak."           |
| "Diplomacy."                  | Heir-at-Law," "The.        |



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|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| "Henry Dunbar."                 | "Loan of a Lover."          |
| "He Would and He Would<br>Not!" | "London Assurance."         |
| Hidden Hand," "The.             | Lone Pine," "The.           |
| "His Last Legs."                | "Lost in London."           |
| "Home."                         | "Love."                     |
| Honeymoon," "The.               | Love Chase," "The.          |
| "How She Loves Him."            | "Love's Sacrifice."         |
| Hunchback," "The.               | "Loyal Till Death."         |
| "Hunted Down."                  | "Lucretia Borgia."          |
| Idiot of the Mountains,"        | "Macbeth."                  |
| "The.                           | Marble Heart," "The.        |
| "Ingomar."                      | "Marie Antoinette."         |
| "Ireland and America."          | "Mary Stuart."              |
| "Ireland as It Was."            | "Masks and Faces."          |
| "Jack Sheppard."                | Merchant of Venice," "The.  |
| "Jane Eyre."                    | Millionaire's Daughter,"    |
| "Jane Shore."                   | "The.                       |
| Jealous Wife," "The.            | "Miss Multon."              |
| "Jessie Brown; or, The Re-      | "Mr. and Mrs. Peter White." |
| lief of Lucknow."               | "Money."                    |
| Jibbenainosay," "The.           | Moonlight Marriage," "The.  |
| "Jones' Baby."                  | "Nan, the Good-for-Noth-    |
| "Julius Cæsar."                 | ing."                       |
| "King John."                    | New Babylon," "The.         |
| "King Louis XI."                | New Magdalen," "The.        |
| "King Richard III."             | "Nicholas Nickleby."        |
| "Lady Audley's Secret."         | "Nita; or, Woman's Con-     |
| "Lady Madge."                   | stancy."                    |
| Lady of Lyons," "The.           | "Not Guilty."               |
| "Leah the Forsaken."            | "Notre Dame."               |
| Little Detective," "The.        | Octoroon," "The.            |
| "Little Katy."                  | "Oliver Twist."             |
|                                 | "Olivia."                   |



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"One Hundred Years Old."	"She Stoops to Conquer."
"Othello."	Spectre Bridegroom," "The.
"Ours."	Stranger," "The.
"Out at Sea."	Stranglers of Paris," "The.
Passion Play," "The.	Streets of New York," "The.
"Paul Arniff."	"Struck Blind."
Pearl of Savoy," "The.	"Sylvia's Lovers."
People's Lawyer," "The.	Ticket - of - Leave Man,"
Pet of the Petticoats,"	"The.
"The.	Toodles," "The.
"Pique."	"True to the Core."
"Proof Positive."	Two Orphans," "The.
"Pygmalion and Galatea."	"Uncle Tom's Cabin."
Regular Fix," "A.	"Under the Gas-Light."
"Richelieu."	Unequal Match," "The.
"Robert Macaire."	Uppercrust," "The.
"Romeo and Juliet."	"Venice Preserved."
"Rule a Wife and Have a	Wandering Heir," "The.
Wife."	"War to the Knife."
"Ruy Blas."	Wicked World," "The.
"Sarah's Young Man."	"Wild Oats."
"School."	Willing Hand," "The.
School for Scandal," "The.	"Within an Inch of His
Scottish Chiefs," "The.	Life."
Scrap of Paper," "A.	Woman in Red," "The.
"Seraphine."	Woman of the People," "A.
Sheep in Wolf's Clothing,"	"Won at Last."
"A.	Wonder," "The.

Minute exposition of all the early dramatic works of Belasco is not practicable; a succinct estimate of their quality will suffice here. Crudity is often obvi-



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ous in them—as it is in the early works of almost all writers—and it sometimes is notably visible in the sentiment and the style. Nevertheless, they display the operation of a mind naturally prone to the dramatic form of expression, frequently animated by the vitality of its own experience, steadily if slowly growing in self-mastery of its faculties, and at once keenly observant of, and quickly sympathetic with, contrasted aspects of life. Along with defects,—namely, perverse preoccupation with non-essential details, occasional verbosity, extravagant premises, and involved construction,—they exhibit expert inventive ability, perspicacious sense of character, acute perception of strong dramatic climax, the faculty of humor, much tenderness of heart, wide knowledge of human misery and human joy, special sympathy with woman, and the skill to tell a story in action. Belasco's dramatic works, before he left San Francisco, exceed not only in number but in merit and practical utility those of many other writers produced as the whole labor of a long lifetime, and the basis of reputation and respect: at least two of his early plays—"Hearts of Oak" and "La Belle Russe"—were, even before he came to the East, gaining fortunes—for other persons. And for a long, long while afterward other persons were to enjoy the chief profit of his labor: it



was not until more than thirteen years later that he was able to launch a successful play,—“The Heart of Maryland,”—and retain personal control of it.

\* \* \* \* \*

A SECOND VENTURE IN CHICAGO.—THE LAST OF  
“AMERICAN BORN.”

Gustave Frohman (who left San Francisco on August 8, 1882, to join his brother Charles, in Chicago, relative to a consolidation of Callender’s and Haverley’s minstrel shows) appears to have disbanded his dramatic company in Denver. At any rate, I have found no further record of it, and Belasco’s play of “American Born” was successfully produced at the Grand Opera House, Chicago, apparently under the joint management of Gustave and Charles Frohman, on August 16.

I have not been able to ascertain, independently, whether or not Charles Frohman travelled to the East with his brother’s dramatic company. According to the “Life of Charles Frohman,” that manager left San Francisco as agent for Haverley’s Mastodon Minstrels and relinquished his position in Indianapolis. According to Belasco’s memory, he and Charles Frohman travelled together coming East from San Francisco, in which case the latter, probably, was business agent of his brother’s com-



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pany. In this biography I have seldom placed reliance on Belasco's memory, except when I have verified his recollections by records contemporary with the incidents discussed,—because I have found that (as he has several times testified in court) he has “no head for dates.” In this matter, however, I believe that his remembrance is accurate. This is his statement of the facts as he recalls them:

“During the trip to Chicago, where I was to halt for the first performance of ‘American Born’ at Hamlin’s Opera House, Charles Frohman and I became fast friends. We instinctively understood each other as though we had been acquainted for years. When we reached Chicago we found that Samuel Colville was about to produce Henry Pettitt’s ‘Taken from Life,’ at McVicker’s, and Charles Frohman was quick to see that there would be great rivalry between Colville’s production and ours. A point in our favor was that the people at McVicker’s were no more ready than we. The rival play was to exploit scenery made from English models, and the advertising announced from fifteen to twenty big scenes. We saw that our comparatively modest production would not do, and decided to improve it, working night and day. We strengthened our company by engaging George Clarke, who was at odds with Daly; ‘Harry’ Courtaine, who was passing through the West, and Ada Warde, who had just returned from Australia. The race to see which would open first was closely contested. By a shrewd move on the part of ‘C. F.’ our play was announced for a certain evening; then we worked like demons to give it three nights sooner.



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In this way we were ready first. Though we went through the first night without any serious mishaps, 'Harry' Courtaine was taken ill in the Second Act, and I had to step into his part myself. But we had a great success and astonished our audience with twenty-one scenes, each a sensation!

"After our engagement was finished inducements came to me from all quarters to give up my New York opportunity and continue with 'American Born.' I knew there was a fortune in the play, but I was loath to come East with the reputation of a writer and producer of highly sensational melodrama. I had an uneasy feeling that it would hurt me with the powers at the Madison Square. Of course I could have kept my interest in 'American Born' without letting my name appear, but I was going to a new land, practically to begin all over again, and I wanted to enter it free of any possible handicap. So I took the claptrap manuscript and burned it."

Soon after making that fiery purgation Belasco left Chicago and came to New York to confront Daniel Frohman and negotiate concerning employment under that manager.

### THE MADISON SQUARE THEATRE.

The Madison Square Theatre, situated on the south side of Twenty-fourth Street, a little way westward from Madison Square and adjacent to the old Fifth Avenue Hotel, stood on the site of what had been Daly's first Fifth Avenue Theatre,



opened August 17, 1869, and burnt down January 1, 1873. That site had, previous to 1869, been for several years occupied by a building, erected in the Civil War time, by Amos R. Eno, and devoted to public amusements. I remember it as once the professional abode of negro minstrels, and again as a sort of vaudeville theatre conducted by a journalist, then well-known, Thaddeus W. Meighan (1821-18—). In 1868 the notorious James Fisk, Jr., acquired control of it, and, in a much improved condition, it was opened, January 25, 1869, as Brougham's Theatre, and such it continued to be until the following April 3, when Fisk summarily ousted Brougham and presently installed a company of French performers in opera bouffe, headed by Mlle. Irma. A few weeks later Augustin Daly obtained a lease of the building from Fisk, made extensive alterations in it, and opened it as the Fifth Avenue Theatre. Some time after its destruction by fire, in 1873, it was rebuilt, and presently it was leased by James Steele Mackaye (1842-1894), an actor and manager of rare talent and eccentric character, who named it the Madison Square Theatre, and opened it, April 23, 1879, with a revival (as "Aftermath; or, Won at Last") of his play which had originally and successfully been produced, as "Won at Last," December 10, 1877,



at Wallack's Theatre. Later, Mackaye formed an association with the Mallory brothers,—the Rev. Dr. George Mallory, editor of an ecclesiastical newspaper called "The Churchman," and Marshall H. Mallory, a highly energetic and enterprising man of business,—the Mallorys becoming the proprietors of the theatre and Mackaye the manager. Under this new control great changes were made in the building; the auditorium was newly and richly decorated, a double stage, which could be raised and lowered, thus facilitating changes of scene, was introduced (the device of Mackaye), on a plan somewhat similar to that which had been successfully adopted ten years earlier by Edwin Booth, at Booth's Theatre; a strong dramatic company was organized, and on February 4, 1880, the house was opened, with a drama by Mackaye, called "Hazel Kirke," a rehash of an earlier play by him, called "An Iron Will," which, in turn, had been adapted from a French drama.

"Hazel Kirke" met with extraordinary success, chiefly because of the superb impersonation of its central character, *Dunstan Kirke*, by Charles Walter Couldock (1815-1898). It was acted 486 consecutive times, at the Madison Square, and subsequently it was performed all over the country. Couldock withdrew from the cast, temporarily,



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after the 200th performance in New York, and Mackaye succeeded him. The run of "Hazel Kirke" at the Madison Square terminated on May 31, 1881, and on June 1 it was succeeded by William Gillette's farce of "The Professor," which held the stage till October 29, following, when it gave place to a play called "Esmeralda," by Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett, which had 350 performances. Meanwhile Mackaye had become dissatisfied with his position and had determined to withdraw from it. His contract with the Mallorys, as he told me at that time (for I knew him well and he often talked with me about his affairs), had been heedlessly made and largely to his disadvantage. Contract or no contract, Mackaye and the Mallorys could not have long remained in association on amicable terms, because they were as antagonistic as fire and water. Mackaye was a wayward genius, of poetic temperament, wildly enthusiastic, impetuous, capricious, volatile, prone to extravagant fancies and bold experiments, and completely unsympathetic with regulative, Sunday-school morality. The Mallorys, on the contrary, were shrewd, practical business men, in no way visionary, thoroughly conventional in character,—in fact, moral missionaries, intent on making the Theatre a sort of auxiliary to the Church, their whole scheme of theatrical



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management being, originally, to profit by the patronage of the Christian public. Some persons, like some things, are incompatible. Mackaye resigned and withdrew while "Esmeralda" was still current, and thus the office was left vacant to which David Belasco succeeded.

### BELASCO AT THE MADISON SQUARE.

On reaching New York and presenting himself at the Madison Square Theatre as a candidate for the office of stage manager,—or, as it is now often and incorrectly designated, "producer,"—Belasco was subjected to minute interrogation, first by Daniel Frohman, the business manager, and then by both the Mallorys. This ordeal appears to have been rigorous, but it was satisfactorily ended and the appointment was duly made. Belasco remembers that, after a long conversation, the Rev. Dr. Mallory remarked, "I'm glad you have laid such small stress on the melodramatic emotions of life, for here we are trying to uphold those emotions which are common to us in our daily existence." By what means the candidate contrived to convey that impression to his clerical inquisitor must remain a mystery, because in all Belasco's views of dramatic composition, and in all his contributions to it, the most prominent and obvious fact is his propensity



to melodrama,—meaning the drama of startling situation and striking stage effect. Dion Boucicault was the originator and the denominator of “the sensation drama,” and David Belasco has been, from the first, and is now, a conspicuously representative exponent of it. He was approved, however, he entered at once on the performance of his duties, and thus began his permanent connection with the New York Stage.

It is doubtful whether Belasco decided wisely when he accepted the office of stage manager of the Madison Square Theatre, under the Mallory management. His play of “American Born” having succeeded in Chicago, he might have accumulated capital from its success and from other resources, and so happily escaped from an association which imposed on him a heavy burden of exacting labor, without advantage of public recognition, and without adequate monetary recompense. He believes, however, that his acceptance of that office laid the cornerstone of his success. Conjecture now is useless. He did accept the office, and he held it, industriously and honorably, for about three years. The terms of his contract with the Mallorys, as he has stated them to me (the original document, I understand, perished in the San Francisco earthquake fire), were, in my judgment, iniquitously unjust



to him. As stage manager he was obligated to render all his services to the Madison Square Theatre management,—that is, to the Mallorys. His salary was \$35 a week for the first season, \$45 a week for the second season, and thereafter to be increased in the same proportion the third, fourth, and fifth seasons. The contract was to continue in force for five years, unless the Mallorys should become dissatisfied. The Mallorys further acquired, by the terms of the agreement, a first option on any play he might write during the period of his employment by them. If a play of his were accepted and produced by them he was to be paid \$10 a night, and \$5 for each matinée, during its representation,—a possible \$70 a week. Furthermore, if a play, or plays, of his which had been rejected by the Mallorys should be accepted and produced by another management, Belasco was to pay to the Mallorys one-half of all royalties he might receive from such play or plays. In Charles Reade's powerful novel "It's Never Too Late to Mend" one of the persons, expostulating with the honest old Jew, *Isaac Levi*, who has declared his intention to leave the Australian goldfields, exclaims: "But, if *you* go, who is to buy our gold-dust?" To this inquiry *Levi* replies, "There are the *Christian* merchants"; whereupon the other earnestly rejoins, "Oh, but they



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are such damned *Jews!*" Perhaps some such thought as this passed through the mind of the Jew Belasco as he signed his bond with his Christian employers. He has been successful and has risen in eminence, but his experience has been far from tranquil,—has been, on the contrary, one of much painful vicissitude and many hardships. At the Madison Square and at several other theatres with which, later, he became associated his labors were, for a long time, as far as the public was concerned, conducted almost entirely under the surface. He worked hard, his industry being incessant, and it was useful to many persons, but his name was seldom or never mentioned in public or in print. The managers by whom he was employed, while utilizing his talent, may almost be said to have been intent on hindering his advancement,—that is, David Belasco, as stage manager, hack dramatist, and general factotum, would be far more useful to those persons than David Belasco, independent and recognized dramatist and theatrical manager, could ever be, and therefore he was repressed: the terms, above stated, of his first Madison Square Theatre contract and the conditions of all his labor during the thirteen years or so succeeding 1882 disclose his situation. He, nevertheless, made his way, slowly but surely, by patient, persistent effort, by the



repeated manifestation of special skill in stage management, by felicity as a mender of plays, and by good judgment in the assembling of companies and the casting of parts. At the Madison Square Theatre he was materially benefited by Bronson Howard's public recognition of his service in having, with the sanction and approval of that author, made minor emendations of the play of "Young Mrs. Winthrop,"—the first play presented there under his direction,—and in having placed it on the stage in a correct, tasteful, and effective manner,—recognition expressed in terms of cordial compliment, on the night of its first performance, October 9, 1882.

Among the plays which were produced at the Madison Square Theatre, under Belasco's efficient and admirable supervision, subsequent to the presentment of "Young Mrs. Winthrop," were Mrs. Burton N. Harrison's "A Russian Honeymoon," April 9, 1888; William Young's "The Rajah; or, Wyndcot's Ward," June 5, 1888; Henry C. De Mille's "Delmar's Daughter,"—which failed,—December 10, 1888; and Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen's "Alpine Roses," January 31, 1884. Mrs. Harrison's "A Russian Honeymoon," one of those exotics that bloom in select society, had been acted, in private, December, 1882, by amateurs, prior to its exposure to the profane gaze,—the ama-



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teur company including Mrs. Bradley Martin, Mrs. William C. Whitney, Mrs. August Belmont, and Mrs. Cora Urquhart Potter,—and thus had obtained social patronage which was specially advantageous to it when shown in the theatre. A revival of “The Rajah” occurred on December 17, 1883. Boyesen’s “Alpine Roses” ran till April 10, 1884. Belasco’s treatment of all those plays redounded to his credit, but his first signal personal victory ensued on the production of his play called “May Blossom,” effected April 12, 1884.

### “MAY BLOSSOM.”

The Mallorys, he has told me, did not like this play, because of the character of its chief male part, did not wish to present it, and did so, finally, with reluctance, after strong opposition, and only because another play which they were preparing to produce was not ready. “May Blossom” pleased the public and kept its place on the Madison Square stage for nearly five months. The 100th performance of it occurred on July 21, the 150th on September 9, and, on September 27, 1884, its first run was ended: it is included in French’s *Miscellaneous Drama*, being No. 59,—but the version of it there published is not the authentic text of



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Belasco's prompt book as used at the Madison Square Theatre: it is printed from a manuscript furnished by Gustave Frohman.

That play, which marks the beginning of Belasco's lasting achievement as a dramatist, claims particular consideration as representative of the character of his mind, the peculiarity of his method of dramatic mechanism, and the quality of his style. He has written better plays than "*May Blossom*,"—plays which are more symmetrical because more deftly constructed and more fluent and rapid in movement, plays which contain more substantial and interesting character, more knowledge of human nature, and more stress of feeling,—but he has written no play that more distinctly manifests his strength and his weakness, his scope and his limitations,—what, intrinsically, he is as a dramatist.

*May Blossom* is the daughter of an old fisherman, resident in a village on the coast of Chesapeake Bay, Virginia, in and some time after the period of the American Civil War. She is beloved by two young men, *Richard Ashcroft* and *Steve Harland*, both estimable and both by her esteemed. Each of those lovers, on the same day, asks her to become his wife. She accepts the proposal of *Ashcroft*, whom she loves, and in rejecting that of *Harland* apprises him of her betrothal to his



rival, who is also one of his friends. *Harland*, though bitterly wounded, accepts her decision in a right and manly spirit. Later, *Ashcroft*, who is sympathetic with the Confederate cause and who has been secretly in communication with the Confederate Army, is suddenly and privately arrested, at night, by Federal military authorities, as a Rebel spy. The arrest is witnessed by *Harland*, whom *Ashcroft* beseeches to inform *May Blossom* of his capture and who solemnly promises to do so. *Harland*, however, believing, or persuading himself to believe, that *Ashcroft* will inevitably be shot as a spy, and being infatuated by passion, breaks his promise and permits the girl to believe that her affianced lover has perished in a storm on Chesapeake Bay. After the lapse of a year *Harland*, still persistent as a lover, persuades *May Blossom* to marry him, and for a time they dwell happily together and a child is born to them. On the second anniversary of their wedding, just before the occurrence of a domestic festival which their friends have arranged in their honor, *Ashcroft*, having escaped from prison, arrives at their home, and, in an interview with *May*, tells her of his arrest and imprisonment, and of *Harland's* promise, and so reveals her husband's treachery. *Harland* is confronted by them and a scene of painful crimination ensues.



*Ashcroft*, maddened by jealousy, declares his purpose of forcible abduction of *May*, who, thereupon, speaking as a wife and mother, repels him. *Ashcroft* departs. *Harland* can plead no defence for his perfidy in breaking his promise to *Ashcroft* except the overwhelming strength of his great love, and his wife is agonized and horrified. The domestic festival, nevertheless, is permitted to proceed. The guests arrive. The miserable husband and wife, masking their wretchedness in smiles, are constrained to participate in merrymaking, and finally are caused by the village pastor to kneel before him, receive his blessing, and embrace and kiss each other, after which ceremonial their guests depart and they are left alone. Then *Harland*, condemning himself and feeling that his wife can no longer love him, leaves her, purposing to join the Rebel Army. Their separation lasts six years. *Ashcroft* is heard of no more. *Harland* survives and ultimately returns to his Virginia home, where a reconciliation is effected between him and his wife, partly by the benevolent offices of the village pastor, but more because *May* has realized that she truly loves him, and because the inevitable action of time has dissipated her resentment of a wrong.

The analyzer of the drama that tells this story perceives in it a constructive mind that is imagina-



tive, romantic, and eccentric, an ardently vehement faculty of expression, and a nimble fancy intent on devising pictorial and pathetic situations, while often heedless of probability—sometimes even of possibility. Things happen not because they would, in actual life, so happen, under the pressure of circumstances, but because the dramatist ordains them to occur, to suit his necessity. Experience has taught the indiscretion of declaring that *anything* is *impossible*, but it is at least highly improbable that a good man would, in any circumstances, break a promise solemnly made to a friend whom he believed was about to die. *Harland* is depicted as a gentleman and one of deep feeling. *Ashcroft's* death, if *Harland* considers it to be inevitable, would at once relieve him of any need to break his promise, even if he had been ever so strongly tempted to do so: doubt of *Ashcroft's* death would inspire far more poignant remorse and fear than *Harland* actually denotes. *May Blossom*, furthermore, would not have omitted to inquire, with far more insistence than she is represented to have shown, into the disappearance of the lover to whom she is betrothed. *Ashcroft*, though a prisoner, would have been permitted to communicate with his friends, since at his trial nothing was proved against him,—yet he was still held in captivity. It is ques-



tionable whether the manly *Harland*, a thoroughly good fellow, would have married *May Blossom*, however much he might have loved her, knowing that she loved another man. It is more than questionable whether *May*, having married *Harland* and borne a child to him, would have repudiated her husband, would have acquiesced in his parting from her and their child, because of the particular wrong that he had done in breaking his promise to *Ashcroft*. The sin that a man commits out of the uncontrollable love that he feels for a woman is, of all sins, the one that she is readiest to forgive. The likelihood that *May Blossom*, loving *Ashcroft*, betrothed to him and mourning for him, would, after the lapse of so short a time as one year, have married anybody is, likewise, open to doubt. Belasco, however, was bent on devising situations, and he accomplished his purpose: grant his premises (as a theatrical audience, in the presence of a competent performance of this play, almost invariably will do), and his dramatic fabric captivates entire sympathy.

I saw and recorded the first performance of "May Blossom." The play was then exceedingly well acted. Georgia Cayvan (1858-1906), personating the heroine, gained the first decisive success of her career. That actress, a handsome brunette, was fortunate in person and in temperament. Her



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figure was lithe, her face was brilliantly expressive, her voice was rich and sweet, she possessed uncommon sensibility, and she could be, at will, ingenuously demure, artlessly girlish, authoritatively stern, or fervently passionate. She attained distinction among American actresses of "emotional" drama and was long and rightly a favorite on our Stage. As *May Blossom* she was first the lovely, simple, charming girl, and later the grave, tranquil wife and mother. In the expression of mental conflict she was, for a time, artificial in method, using the well-worn, commonplace expedients of reeling, staggering, and clutching at furniture; but she reformed that altogether, and her capability of intense passion in repose was clearly indicated: the character was developed and truly impersonated. Among her associates in the representation were Joseph Wheelock, Sr. (183[8?]-1908), and William J. LeMoyne (1831-1905), both actors of signal ability, now forgotten or only dimly remembered. Wheelock, in his early day, was a favorite *Romeo*. LeMoyne was an actor of rare talent and remarkable versatility. His impersonations of eccentric, humorous, peppery old gentlemen were among the finest and most amusing that our Stage has known. In this play he personated *Unca Bartlett*, a benevolent, affectionate, whimsical rural clergyman. I





Photograph by Sarony.

Belasco's Collection.

**GEORGIA CAYVAN**

About 1884, when she acted in "May Blossom"







recall a somewhat painful incident of the first night of "May Blossom," which should be recorded as indicative of its author's peculiar constitution. Belasco had made arduous efforts in preparing the play for the stage and also during the performance of it, and when, after the last curtain, he was called and constrained to thank his enthusiastic audience, he could hardly speak, and after saying a few words he fainted. This collapse, genuine and, to a hypersensitive person, natural, was, by some observers, cruelly derided as affectation. Many persons, fortunately for themselves superior to trepidation, seem incapable of understanding as genuine the "fears and scruples" which sometimes overwhelm others: I remember once, at a banquet, in Boston, to Dr. Holmes, noting with surprise the impatience with which my table neighbor, Colonel Higginson, gazing at Holmes,—who was trembling with excitement in view of what he had to do,—said to me: "What's he worried about! He has only to read some verses!" Many years after the first presentation of "May Blossom," which it was my privilege to hail, the next morning, in "The New York Tribune," as the best new play which had, up to that time, been produced at the Madison Square Theatre, Belasco said to me: "Your verdict meant everything to me,—more, during the first week or



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two, than the public approval. Bronson Howard's recognition of my work in improving 'Young Mrs. Winthrop' and your support of my 'May Blossom' did more to help me break the iron ring I was shut up in in New York than everything else put together!"

The prosperity of "May Blossom" much facilitated the progress of Belasco toward the attainment of his ambitious object, which was the control of a high-class theatre in New York; but he was yet to meet with disappointments and hardships and to undergo many trials. The venomous practice of stigmatizing him as a plagiarist, which has long prevailed, began almost coincidentally with the success of "May Blossom." It should here be mentioned again that this play was transformed by him from an earlier play of his, called "Sylvia's Lovers," written about 187(5?), and first produced, in that year, at Piper's Opera House, in Virginia City. When he had prepared it in a new and definitive form for presentment at the Madison Square Theatre he showed the manuscript to Howard P. Taylor, a writer for "The New York Dramatic Mirror," at that time edited by Harrison Grey Fiske, and consulted him as a reputed expert relative to historical details of the Civil War. That person had offered to the managers of the Madison



Square Theatre a play called "Caprice" (produced August 11, 1884, at the New Park Theatre, New York, by John A. Stevens and the author, in partnership—Minnie Maddern, now Mrs. Fiske, being the star), which those managers rejected. After "May Blossom" had been successfully presented, Taylor accused Belasco of having caused the Mal-lory brothers to reject "Caprice," and also with having stolen ideas from that play,—which, as stage manager and adviser of the Madison Square Theatre, he had seen,—and used them in "May Blossom." Belasco urgently requested him to make the accusation in court, but Taylor, though he long and maliciously persisted in publishing his defamatory charge, would never bring the matter to a legal test. On the occasion of the 1000th performance of "May Blossom," at a dinner given by Daniel Frohman and "Harry" Miner, in celebration of the event, Harrison Grey Fiske, who, at his own request, had been included among the speakers, stated that he felt he had a duty to perform in tendering an apology for the unfounded accusations repeatedly made by Taylor, in "The Dramatic Mirror," impugning the integrity of Belasco as an author and a man.

This was the original cast of "May Blossom," at the Madison Square:



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<i>May Blossom</i> .....	Georgia Cayvan.
<i>Tom Blossom</i> .....	Benjamin Maginley.
<i>Steve Harland</i> .....	Joseph Wheelock, Sr.
<i>Richard Ashcroft</i> .....	Walden Ramsay.
<i>Unca Bartlett</i> .....	William J. LeMoyne.
<i>Owen Hathaway</i> .....	Thomas Whiffen.
<i>Captain Drummond</i> .....	Henry Talbot.
<i>Yank</i> .....	Master Tommy Russell.
<i>Lulu</i> .....	Little Belle.
<i>Deborah</i> .....	Mrs. Thomas Whiffen.
<i>Hank Bluster</i> .....	King Hedley.
<i>Hiram Sloane</i> .....	Joseph Frankau.
<i>Epe</i> .....	I. N. Long.
<i>Millie</i> .....	Etta Hawkins.
<i>Little May</i> .....	Carrie Elbert.

Whiffen was succeeded, as *Hathaway*, in this company, by De Wolf Hopper,—one of the few genuine and intrinsically humorous comedians on our Stage to-day.

### FIRST VISIT TO ENGLAND.—“CALLED BACK.”

In the summer of 1884 Belasco was sent to London by his employers in order that he might see a performance of a play entitled “Called Back,”—founded on the novel of that name by Hugh Conway,—which those managers had bought for representation in America. He sailed aboard the *Alaska*, on July 5, making his first voyage across the Atlantic, and it was then our personal acquaintance began,—as I chanced to be a passenger



aboard the same ship. He was not, I remember, a good sailor, and for several days he remained in seclusion, but before the end of the voyage we met and had a pleasant conversation, and I found him then, as I have found him since, a singularly original and interesting character and a genial companion. He said that his stay in England would be brief, as indeed it was, for having, on arrival in London, witnessed a representation of "Called Back," then being acted at the Haymarket Theatre by Beerbohm-Tree and his dramatic company, he came back to New York on the return voyage of the same ship that had carried him over. His task,—which was duly performed,—was to prepare "Called Back" for presentment at the Madison Square, but as "May Blossom" continued to be prosperous there it was decided not to interrupt its successful run, but to produce the new play at another theatre, and that play, accordingly, was brought out, September 1, 1884, under Belasco's direction, at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, then managed by John Stetson,—the leading parts in it being acted by Robert B. Mantell and Jessie Millward. The work done by Belasco in connection with "Called Back" was, practically, the last that he ever did for the Mallorys. In London the play had been so fashioned that *Paolo Macari* was the



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star part, acted by Beerbohm-Tree. Belasco's task, as adapter, was that of devising minor modifications rendering the play better suited to presentment before American audiences: it was desired that the part of *Gilbert Vaughan* should be made as conspicuous as possible,—the Mallorys being intent to make the most of the popularity of Mantell, who had been brilliantly successful in "The Romany Rye" and "Fedora" and had become a favorite with the public. *Macari*, however, remained the principal character in the drama, and William J. Ferguson, by whom it was exceedingly well played, maintained it in its natural place.

### CHANGES AT THE MADISON SQUARE.

Material changes, meanwhile, had occurred or were then in progress in the management of the Madison Square. Soon after Steele Mackaye left that house Belasco's friend Gustave Frohman, one of its attachés, had followed him, to join in management of the new Lyceum. Charles Frohman, who had been employed, at a salary of \$100 a week, as a booking agent, to send on tours of the country all plays that the Mallorys had successfully produced, had withdrawn, or was about to do so, to devote himself to ventures of his own. Daniel





Photograph by Underwood & Underwood. Copyright,  
Author's Collection.

**CHARLES FROHMAN**



Photograph by Moffet,  
Belasco's Collection.

**DANIEL FROHMAN**







Frohman, the business manager, was dissatisfied with his situation and prospects, and his retirement soon occurred. The Mallorys were forming a business alliance with Albert Marshall Palmer (1838-1905), when Belasco returned from his trip to England in their interests, and on August 29, 1884, public announcement was made that Palmer had become a partner in their enterprise. Palmer was a dictatorial person, and Belasco, much more experienced in technical aspects of theatrical matters and far abler as a stage director, came almost immediately into conflict with him. The particular incident which precipitated the rupture was trivial. At a rehearsal of "Called Back" which Belasco was conducting Palmer made his appearance, accompanied by Boucicault. Their presence disconcerted the actors and Belasco (as he told me) requested them to retire, explaining the reason for that request. Boucicault, appreciating the situation, politely said, "All right, my boy, I'll go." Palmer, on the contrary, brusquely exclaimed, "I'll be damned if you will," and added the assurance that he was a partner in the business and intended to be present at all rehearsals. To this Belasco replied, "Mr. Palmer, the actors can't rehearse with you and Mr. Boucicault here, and if you don't go I shall dismiss the rehearsal,"—whereupon Palmer



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went. This encounter and Palmer's general manner satisfied Belasco that he could not long retain his office, and although Palmer subsequently requested him to remain at the Madison Square (after "Called Back" was safely launched at the Fifth Avenue) and continue to rehearse the company there, benevolently proposing that he would himself, in each case, supervise the last two or three full rehearsals (an old theatrical practice, whereby one man does all the work and another comes in at the last moment to take all the credit for it, while actually doing almost nothing), he insisted on obtaining, and did obtain, acceptance of his resignation. The Mallorys themselves were the next to leave the Madison Square, and on March 13, 1885, Palmer became sole manager of that theatre.

### A LABORIOUS INTERLUDE.—LYCEUM THEATRE.

After leaving that house Belasco for about two years worked as a free-lance in the theatrical arena. One plan which he seriously entertained and strove to accomplish in that interval was the formation of a theatrical company, headed by himself as a star, to traverse the country, presenting "Hamlet," or a new, sympathetic, popular drama of his own fabrication,—possibly to present both those plays,—in which he might, perhaps, make a personal hit





**DAVID BELASCO AS HAMLET**

*"Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is 't to leave betimes?"*

**—Act V. sc. 2**

Photograph by Houseworth, San Francisco.  
Original loaned by Mrs. David Belasco.















and become as prosperous as certain other actors then were,—notably Jefferson, as *Rip Van Winkle*, and John S. Clarke, as *Major de Boots*. “I was keen to *act* then,” he said to me, “and sometimes now I wish I had stuck to it.” With him as with most other persons, however, the path that he should tread was ordained by the iron force of circumstance. He did whatever work he could find to do, and his occupations were various. He trained members of an amateur society, in Brooklyn, called “The Amaranth.” He revised a play called “Caught in a Corner” (it had previously been tinkered by Clay M. Greene, and it was produced in New York, Belasco’s arrangement, November 1, 1887, at the Fourteenth Street Theatre) for Maurice Bertram Curtis, an actor now dimly remembered for his performance in “Sam’l of Posen,” with whom he had, in 1878, been affiliated as a member of the “Frayne Troupe,” travelling in California. More particularly he became associated with Steele Mackaye, in the Lyceum. That theatre was situated in Fourth Avenue, next to the old Academy of Design, which stood on the northwest corner of Twenty-third Street and Fourth Avenue. It was built, on ground leased from William Y. Mortimer, by Philip G. Hubert, Charles W. Clinton, and Michael Brennan, and it was opened by Mackaye on April 6, 1885, with



a play called "Dakolar," which he had "conveyed" from "Le Maître de Forges," by Georges Ohnet. The chief parts were played by Robert B. Mantell, John Mason, Viola Allen, and Sadie Martinot. Belasco's position at the Lyceum was that of assistant stage manager and general helper for Mackaye, whose signal ability he appreciated and admired. He was engaged at a salary of \$150 a week,—which, however, he never received,—was installed in a private office, and, for a short time, was happy because deluded as to what he was about to accomplish. In his "Story," referring to the play of "Dakolar," he relates that, prior to its production, Mackaye read it, at his home, to a group of critical persons, of whom I was one, in order to obtain their opinions of it. As to one point his memory is at fault: I was not present. Mackaye (who was a friend of mine) did read "Dakolar" to me, but that reading occurred privately, in his office. We sat, I remember, at a large table, he at an end of it and I at the right-hand side. He was a highly excitable person, and as his reading progressed he became wildly enthusiastic, hitching his chair nearer and nearer to me, with much extravagant gesticulation, so that I was impelled to hitch my chair further and further away from him, till the two of us actually made an almost complete circuit of the



table before the reading was finished! It was a tiresome experience. At the critical symposium which Belasco recalls various opinions were expressed by Mackaye's auditors, that of Belasco being withheld until Mackaye insisted on its expression, when it was made known as strongly adverse to the play. Thereafter a coolness ensued between the manager and his assistant. Other causes of friction occurred, and presently Mackaye remarked to him, "There is room for only *one* genius in this theatre, and *one* of us ought to resign." This intimation caused Belasco to retire, and so ended that episode.

Mackaye, who, in his youth, had studied in Paris, under the direction of François Delsarte (1811-1871),—an eccentric person, of whom and his peculiar character, ways, and notions the reader can pleasantly obtain an instructive glimpse from that delightful book, by Mme. Hagermann-Lindencrone, "In the Courts of Memory,"—had, from the time of his advent in New York theatrical life (1872), sedulously striven to promote the tuition of histrionic aspirants according to the tenets of that instructor; and in opening the Lyceum Theatre he started, in connection with it, a School of Acting. In this Franklin Sargent at first co-labored with him, but after a short time withdrew, to carry on a



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school of his own. When Belasco left Mackaye and the Lyceum he joined Sargent, and as his extraordinary talent for stage direction had made him popular with Mackaye's pupils, the larger part of them followed him to Sargent's school,—to the lively disgust of Mackaye.

### "VALERIE" AT WALLACK'S.

An important incident of this fluctuant period was Belasco's employment by Lester Wallack (1820-1888), with whom he had become so pleasantly acquainted in 1882, at the time of the New York production of his "La Belle Russe." Wallack, one of the best actors who have adorned our Stage and for about thirty years the leading theatrical manager in America, was then drawing toward the close of his career and the end of his life. His strength was failing, his audience dropping away. He thought he might perhaps reanimate public interest in his theatre,—where he still maintained a fine company,—if he should appear in a new character. "I think I have one more 'study' in me," he told Belasco, "and I should like you to try to make for me a play with good parts for Mr. Bellew and Miss Robe [Kyrle Bellew, Annie Robe, John Gilbert, Mme. Ponisi, Sophie Eyre, and Henry Edwards were among the members of his





Photograph by Sarony.

Courtesy of Percy Mackaye, Esq.

**JAMES STEELE MACKAYE**

About 1885







company at the time], and with a character for me similar to *Henry Beauclerc*, in 'Diplomacy.' Another 'Diplomacy' would carry us over." Belasco had no original play in mind at that time and Wallack had no definite suggestion to make, beyond his wish for something similar to "Diplomacy,"—which he had produced, for the first time in America and with great success, at Wallack's Theatre (the Thirteenth Street house), April 1, 1878. The result of several long conferences between manager and playwright was, accordingly, that a new version of Sardou's "Fernande" (which had been first produced in America, at the Dalys' Fifth Avenue Theatre, June 7, 1870, with Daniel H. Harkins, George Clarke, and Agnes Ethel in the chief parts) would be the most auspicious venture. On this play, accordingly, Belasco began to work. "I had no home in those days," he told me, "except a small hall bedroom at No. 48 West Twenty-fourth Street, and no proper place in which to write. I used to do much of my work in the public writing-room of the old Fifth Avenue Hotel [which stood at the northwest corner of Twenty-third Street and Broadway], but I wanted to be near Wallack, because frequent consultations were necessary, in order that I might meet his requirements and fit his company, and so I



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asked him if he couldn't give me some place in his theatre where I might work conveniently. He very courteously and greatly to my delight opened his own library to me, in his house 'round the corner [Wallack dwelt in a house on the north side of West Thirtieth Street, No. 18, adjoining his theatre], and there I made my version of 'Fernande' and, practically, lived till it was done."

That version, called "Valerie," was completed within four weeks, and it was produced at Wallack's Theatre on February 15, 1886. Wallack, instead of buying the refashioned play outright from Belasco, as was the usual custom of the time, agreed to pay him the handsome royalty of \$250 a week, as long as it held his stage,—the adapter, moreover, being privileged to present it outside of New York. "Valerie," while serviceable in a theatrical way, is not a thoroughly good play, and it is distinctly inferior to the earlier version, by Hart Jackson,—as, indeed, could scarcely be otherwise, since Belasco had worked under the disadvantage of being required to make a new play on the basis of an old one, then still current, in which the best possible use of the material implicated had already been made. In the building of "Valerie," which is comprised in three acts, reliance was placed in whatever of freshness could be



imparted to the method of treatment,—and that was not much. The scene of the action was shifted from France to England. The foreground of the life of *Fernande*, appearing under the name of *Valerie*, was omitted. The names of the other characters were also changed. The First Act deals largely with preparation and is devoted mainly to a somewhat preposterous scene in which the evil agent of the drama, *Helena*, allures her lover, *Sir Everard Challoner*, by a false confession that she is tired of him, to make a true confession not only that he is tired of her but that he loves another woman. *Challoner* is represented as of a noble English family and of a singularly ingenuous mind. He states that the woman whom he loves is a young stranger whom he has casually encountered, leaning against a post, in the street, in a condition of faintness, and the deceptive *Helena* thereupon professes her services to discover the unknown object of his sudden affection. She has rescued a vagrant female from the streets, and it turns out that this waif is the interesting stranger for whom they are to seek. In the Second Act the malignant *Helena* exults in the marriage of her former lover to a woman whom she believes to be a demirep. That is to consummate her revenge for having been discarded by *Challoner*, but when she is about to over-



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whelm him with the declaration that he has wedded an outcast, *Walter*, the good genius of the story, forcibly compels her sudden retirement behind a velvet curtain. This is the "strong situation" of the drama. In the Third Act this evil woman's scheme of vengeance, which she endeavors to push to a completion, is finally discomfited by the vindication of the girl, *Valerie*, and a happy climax crowns an incredible fiction.

The play is long and portions of it are tedious. The dialogue is generally commonplace. Two strikingly original lines, however, attracted my attention: "Love at first sight, you know," and "this is the happiest day of my life!" The postulate illustrated is kindred with that of Congreve's well-known (and almost invariably misquoted) couplet,

"Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned,  
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned."

That theme may, perhaps, be interesting. It seemed to interest auditors at Wallack's, but the manifestations of approval were probably due to the manner in which the play was acted rather than to its intrinsic appeal. Annie Robe appeared as *Valerie*. There was in the personality of that actress a certain muscular vigor incompatible with the ideal of a sweet, fragile girl, intended in the original scheme



of Sardou and suggested in its paraphrase, but Miss Robe's performance evinced a fine, woman-like intuition and it was suffused with touching sincerity. Wallack, as *Walter*, had to personate a character which, for him, was of trifling moment,—the poised, self-possessed man of the world, at home amid difficulties and always master of the situation. The kindness of his nature shone through his embodiment and the grace of his action made it delightful. In Wallack's acting there was that delicate suggestion of great knowledge of human nature and of the world which can be expressed only by those who have had ample experience of life, and also there was the denotement of a nature which had been sweetened, not embittered, by the trials through which it had passed. Kyrle Bellew acted with simple dignity in situations which sometimes were of such an irrational character as might well perplex or baffle the art of the most accomplished comedian. His performance was much and justly admired. Sophie Eyre, who assumed the affronted female, pursued her baleful purpose with surpassing energy, much breadth of treatment, and frequently fine theatrical effect: but her performance excelled in force rather than in refinement.

This is the complete cast of the play as acted at Wallack's Theatre:



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<i>Sir Everard Challoner</i> .....	Kyrle Bellew.
<i>Mons. Xavier</i> .....	Henry Edwards.
<i>Hon. George Alfred Bettly</i> .....	Ivan Shirley.
<i>Dr. Rushton</i> .....	Daniel Leeson.
<i>Roberts</i> .....	John Germon.
<i>Jameson</i> .....	S. Du Bois.
<i>Helena Malcom</i> .....	Sophie Eyre.
<i>Valerie de Brian</i> .....	Annie Robe.
<i>Lady Bettly</i> .....	Mme. Ponisi.
<i>Julia Trevillian</i> .....	Helen Russell.
<i>Agnes</i> .....	Kate Bartlett.
<i>Walter Trevillian</i> .....	Lester Wallack.

Such merit as "Valerie" contains was derived from the French original. It is a piece of journeyman work, undertaken as such, and as such well enough done. Wallack seems to have been conscious of its defects: in a letter of his to Belasco, which the latter has carefully preserved, he says:

(*Lester Wallack to David Belasco.*)

"13, West Thirtieth Street,

"[New York] December 31, [1885.]

"Dear Mr. Belasco:—

"We must have another 'go' at the last act.

"The dialogues are infinitely too long, and we have missed the opportunity for a strong scene for Mr. Bellew and Miss Robe.

"I rehearsed the two first acts yesterday.

"Yours always,

"LESTER WALLACK."





From an old photograph.  
The Albert Davis Collection.

**ANNIE ROBE**

About 1886, when they acted in Belasco's "Valerie"



Photograph by Strong,  
Belasco's Collection.

**KYRLE BELLEW**







Handsome scenes were provided for the play at Wallack's and it received some measure of public support, holding the stage till March 14. Wallack's first appearance in it was his first appearance in the season of 1885-'86, and *Walter* was the last new part that he ever acted. Belasco had great respect for Wallack, recognizing and appreciating his wonderful powers as an actor and his extraordinary achievements as a manager. Wallack, while Belasco was writing "*Valerie*," offered him employment, as stage manager, to produce it, but Belasco wisely declined. "I knew," he said, "that Wallack would not be able to sit by and let me direct his company—much less himself—and so I thanked him but declined, telling him, 'Mr. Wallack, I should be afraid of Mr. Bellew and Miss Robe, and of *you*!' When he asked me to 'come in from time to time and watch the rehearsals,' of course I agreed, and I did go in and made a few suggestions to him. I could have remained at Wallack's, in charge of the stage, but I saw my doing so would lead to nothing, so I refused an offer he made me and kept myself free. I treasure the memory of Wallack and my association with him. He was one of the big figures of our Stage, very pathetic, to me, in his last efforts to stem the tide running against him, and he was the



most courteous gentleman I ever met in the Theatre."

MORE ERRORS CORRECTED.

Belasco's carelessness of statement is again illustrated in a remark made in his "Story" regarding contemporary conditions when Wallack's career was ending: "New men," he writes, "were on the horizon, public taste was changing, and lighter forms of entertainment were coming into vogue. Even Daly was meeting reverses and the Madison Square was going downhill." It is regrettable that such an influential manager should fall into such errors and unintentionally contribute to the generally prevailing ignorance of theatrical history. I am again prompted to quote the old sage, Dr. Johnson, who remarks that "To be ignorant is painful, but it is dangerous to quiet our uneasiness by the delusive opiate of hasty persuasion." At the time of which Belasco speaks (1886-'87) Daly was, in fact, on the crest of the wave of success, with "A Night Off," "Nancy & Co.," and revivals of the Old Comedies. In May, 1886, he took his company on a notably successful tour which, after nine weeks in London, embraced Paris, Hamburg, Berlin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, and Dublin, and soon after his return to America he produced, in New





Photograph by Falk.

Courtesy of Arthur Wallack, Esq.

**LESTER WALLACK**

**Taken at about the time he produced Belasco's "Valerie,"—1886  
(The last picture ever made of Wallack)**







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York, for the first time in our country, "The Taming of the Shrew," in which Ada Rehan gave her matchless personation of *Katharine* and which was the most successful of all his ventures in the second half of his great career, ending in 1899. The Madison Square, so far from "going downhill," was just entering on a period of notable prosperity and influence, with Jones's "Saints and Sinners," Mansfield's presentment of "Prince Karl," which ran from May 3 to August 14, 1886; "Jim the Penman," "Heart of Hearts," etc. Palmer remained in management of the Madison Square till September, 1891.

### AN EXTRAORDINARY COMPANY AND A SUMMER SEASON IN SAN FRANCISCO.

Soon after "Valerie" was withdrawn at Wallack's,—that is, March-April, 1886,—Belasco received and accepted an invitation to return to the city of his birth, and the scene of much of his vicissitudinous early career, as stage manager of what was fairly denominated "a stock company of stars" and was, without question, one of the strongest theatrical companies ever assembled in America. That company was organized by Al. Hayman to fill a summer season at the Baldwin Theatre (of which he had



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obtained control in 1883) and it comprised the following players:

Robert B. Mantell.	Errol Dunbar.
Joseph Haworth.	George H. Cohill.
William J. Ferguson.	Sophie Eyre.
Charles Vandenhoff.	Florence Gerard.
Rowland Buckstone.	Mary Shaw.
Henry Miller.	Louise Dillon.
Owen Fawcett.	Kate Denin.
W. H. Crompton.	Kitty Wilson.
Maurice Barrymore.	Ada Dyer.
L. J. Henderson.	Mrs. Alfred Fisher.
Alfred Fisher.	Agnes Thomas.

Mrs. C. R. Saunders.

Hayman's company began its engagement under Belasco's direction, at the Baldwin, May 31, in a dramatized synopsis of Ouida's novel of "Moths," which was cast thus:

<i>Lord Jura</i> .....	Joseph Haworth.
<i>Prince Zouroff</i> .....	Charles Vandenhoff.
<i>Raphael de Correze</i> .....	Henry Miller.
<i>Duke of Mull and Cantyre</i> .....	Rowland Buckstone.
<i>Joan</i> .....	E. J. Holden.
<i>Fuchsia Leach</i> .....	Louise Dillon.
<i>Duchess de Sonnah</i> .....	Agnes Thomas.
<i>Lady Dolly Vanderdecken</i> .....	Kate Denin.
<i>Princess Nadine Helegrine</i> .....	Sydney Cowell.
<i>Vera Herbert</i> .....	Sophie Eyre.

On June 7 Belasco's "Valerie" was presented, the parts being distributed as follows:



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<i>Sir Everard Challoner</i> .....	Joseph Haworth.
<i>Walter Trevillian</i> .....	W. J. Ferguson.
<i>Mons. Xavier</i> .....	Charles Vandenhoff.
<i>Hon. George Alfred Bettly</i> .....	Rowland Buckstone.
<i>Dr. Rushton</i> .....	W. H. Crompton.
<i>Roberts</i> .....	E. J. Holden.
<i>Helena Malcom</i> .....	Sophie Eyre.
<i>Valerie de Brian</i> .....	Louise Dillon.
<i>Lady Bettly</i> .....	Kate Denin.
<i>Julia Trevillian</i> .....	Sydney Cowell.
<i>Agnes</i> .....	Trella Foltz.

"Valerie" was received with favor and played for one week. It was succeeded, June 14, by a revival of "The Marble Heart,"—in which Mantell played *Phidias* and *Raphael*, Ferguson *Volage*, and Miss Eyre *Marco*. "Anselma" was acted on the 21st; "The Lady of Lyons" on the 24th, and "Alone in London" on the 28th. A particularly rich setting was provided for the last named presentment, which was warmly commended for the perfection of Belasco's stage management, the excellence of the acting and "beautiful and bewitching scenery and stage effects." Mme. Modjeska appeared on July 12, supported by members of the Hayman company, in Maurice Barrymore's nasty play of "Nadjezda": this, however, appears to have been brought forth under the stage management of its author and without any assistance from Belasco. On



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July 18 the latter took a benefit at the Baldwin, at which the theatre was densely crowded by a wildly enthusiastic audience. The occasion was made a general testimonial of the cordial admiration and high personal esteem in which Belasco had come to be held in his native city, by the public as well as by fellow-members of his profession. It was directed by a committee of which Charles Bozenta (Modjeska's husband and manager) was the President and Clay M. Greene and Maurice Barrymore the Vice-Presidents, many distinguished men and women of the Theatre and of public life in California being members. The programme included the names of more than sixty-five players and the principal features of it were as follows:

"Clothilde," One Act of, by Jeffreys-Lewis and Company.  
M. B. Curtis.....Recitations.  
McKee Rankin.....Recitations.  
"The Private Secretary," One act of, with John N. Long  
as the *Rev. Spaulding*, and the original cast.  
Helene Dineon.....Songs.  
Maurice Barrymore.....Recitations.  
"Carrie" Swan....."Specialties."  
Edwin Foy.....Imitations.  
"Called Back," One Act of,  
*Macari*.....Joseph R. Grismer.  
*Gilbert Vaughan*.....Maurice Barrymore.  
*Pauline*.....Phœbe Davies.  
*Mary*.....Louise Dillon,





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Belasco's Collection.

ALBERT M. PALMER







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E. J. Buckley.....“'Ostler Joe.”  
“Shadows of a Great City,” Last Act of, by the original cast.

On July 26 Belasco left San Francisco for New York,—where immediately after his arrival he did some unacknowledged tinkering and readjusting of a play by Archibald Clavering Gunter, called “A Wall Street Bandit,” which was produced, September 20, at the Standard Theatre, under the management of Charles Frohman. Belasco’s next employment was at the Lyceum Theatre.

### AFFAIRS OF THE LYCEUM.

Wallack’s company did not last much more than a year after the time when Belasco was offered an opportunity to join it as stage manager: it was disbanded on May 30, 1887, after giving a final performance, at Daly’s Theatre, in “The Romance of a Poor Young Man.” Thus Belasco’s decision not to ally himself in any permanent capacity with that organization proved fortunate for him. Meantime Mackaye’s administration of the Lyceum Theatre was not successful. “Dakolar” ran there from April 6 to May 23 (1885), when the house was closed. On September 15, following, a reopening was effected, with a new version, by Mackaye, of Victorien Sardou’s “Andrea,” presented under the name of “In Spite of All,”—the chief parts of it



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being acted by Minnie Maddern (now Mrs. Fiske), Eben Plympton, Richard Mansfield, and Selina Dolaro. That play held the stage till November 7, when Mackaye relinquished his lease of the Lyceum and control of that theatre was obtained by Daniel Frohman. "In Spite of All" was taken to Boston by Charles Frohman, Belasco going with it as stage-manager. After the presentment of it in Boston Belasco returned to New York, and soon entered into the engagement with Wallack which has been described. Having finished "Valerie," he renewed his association with Sargent, in the School of Acting, thus coming into indirect connection with the Lyceum Theatre. On November 10, 1885, that house had been opened under the direction of Helen Dauvray ("Little Nell, the California Diamond"), Daniel Frohman being the lessee, in a play written specially for her by Bronson Howard, called "One of Our Girls," in which she made a success as *Kate Shipley*. That play was acted for 200 nights, the run closing on May 22, 1886, when Miss Dauvray retired from the direction of the Lyceum. Daniel Frohman then announced himself as the manager of that theatre, opening it, on May 24, with Frank Mayo, in the play of "Nordeck," which ran for two weeks, when the season ended. It was reopened on September 18, following, with Henry C. De



Mille's play of "The Main Line; or, Rawson's Y." Belasco, through his indirect connection with the Lyceum, came into employment in rehearsal of various plays for the English actress May Fortesque (Finney), who, on October 18, 1886, began a brief engagement at the Lyceum, appearing in W. S. Gilbert's "Faust," acting *Gretchen*, and later, November 8, played *Frou-Frou*, and, November 29, *Iolanthe*, in "King Rene's Daughter," and *Jenny Northcott*, in "Sweethearts." Miss Fortesque was not successful in America and on March 28, 1887, she sailed for England. While Belasco was rehearsing her company Daniel Frohman engaged him at the Lyceum, at a salary of \$35 a week, as stage manager, adviser, and general assistant, and that position he held till early in the year 1890. Meanwhile Belasco, besides his activities as a teacher in the Lyceum School of Acting (the pupils of that school, under his direction, gave a creditable performance of a translation of Molière's "Les Précieuses Ridicules," March 28, 1887, at the Lyceum), was at work on the revision of a play by John Maddison Morton (1811-1891) and Robert Reece, called "Trade," which was written for Edward A. Sothern and had been inherited by his son, Edward Hugh Sothern, whose contract with Miss Dauvray had been assumed by Daniel Froh-



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man, and who was soon to figure at the Lyceum as leading man and, practically, as star. The play of "Trade," in its original form, was defective. The elder Sothern, an intimate friend of mine, consulted me about it, I remember, and at his request, and as a friendly act, I suggested some changes and wrote into it one scene. My work, however, was not important. Belasco practically rewrote the play, and, under the name of "The Highest Bidder," his version of it was produced at the Lyceum, May 8, 1887, with E. H. Sothern as *Jack Hammerton*, the leading part.

### "THE HIGHEST BIDDER."

"The Highest Bidder" is one of the many plays which are correctly designated as "tailor-made." Such things do not spring from an original dramatic impulse. Morton and Reece aimed to fit the elder Sothern with a part that would suit him, and they did not accomplish the purpose, nor did that accomplished comedian, who did much work on their play. Belasco, revising it for the younger Sothern, considerably improved it, telling the story more fluently and making the central character more piquant and flexible. *Jack Hammerton* is an amiable young man, of abundant wealth, by profession an auctioneer, by nature diffident in gen-





Photograph by Sarony.

Belasco's Collection.

**EDWARD H. SOTHERN**

About 1888







eral society, impulsive in temperament and prone to entangle himself in foolish embarrassments, but capable of calm, decisive action in situations of danger. An old friend of his, resident in the country, has become involved in financial difficulties and a valuable estate is to be sold to relieve him. The young auctioneer is employed to conduct the sale, and he finds that his old friend has a charming young daughter, supposed to be an heiress, who is being courted by a specious baronet who is a dishonest gambler and a forger. In trying to unmask this rascal the amiable auctioneer involves himself in a distressing tangle of misapprehension, but eventually he discomfits the wily schemer (who incidentally makes an abortive attempt to murder him), frees himself from suspicion, and proves at once the rectitude of his intentions and the ardor of his devotion to the lady whom he loves and whom he wishes to rescue from the toils of a villain. At the climax of the auction scene he "knocks down" his friend's estate to himself, in the capacity of "the highest bidder," and then lays it, with his heart, at the feet of the object of his adoration,—who, after an excess of hesitancy, accepts him and his property.

"The Highest Bidder" was set in handsome scenery and the parts in it were judiciously cast:



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<i>Lawrence Thornhill</i> .....	J. W. Piggott.
<i>Bonham Cheviot</i> .....	William J. LeMoyne.
<i>Jack Hammerton</i> .....	Edward H. Sothern.
<i>Muffin Struggles</i> .....	Rowland Buckstone.
<i>Evelyn Graine</i> .....	Herbert Archer
<i>Joseph</i> .....	Walter Clark Bellows.
<i>Parkyn</i> .....	William A. Faversham.
<i>Rose Thornhill</i> .....	Belle Archer.
<i>Mrs. Honiton Lacy</i> .....	Alice Crowther.
<i>Louise Lacy</i> .....	Vida Croly.

LeMoyne and Miss Archer, on this occasion, made their first appearance at the Lyceum. The play was well acted, Sothern animating the serio-comic part of *Hammerton* with earnest feeling and sustained and winning vivacity. The success had not been expected. Dismal forebodings had preceded its production. "We had a small private audience at a dress rehearsal," said Belasco, "and it was ghastly; everybody was unresponsive and chilly, they pretty well took the starch out of all the actors, and made us all nervous, despondent, and miserable. We had another 'go' at the piece, with nobody in front, and it seemed a little better; but we were all stale on it; we couldn't tell what would happen. What a difference when we had a friendly audience, fresh to the piece and willing to be pleased!" "The Highest Bidder" held the stage from May 8 to July 16, when the Lyceum



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was closed for the season, but it was revived on August 29, and it ran till September 17. Then, on September 20, under Belasco's stage direction, Cecil Raleigh's neat farce of "The Great Pink Pearl" was brought out, together with the drama in one act called "Editha's Burglar." The latter is an adaptation of a story by Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett, and its production is specially notable as being that of the first play by the brilliant and representative American dramatist Augustus Thomas, and because of the instant success achieved in its central character by Elsie Leslie,—certainly the most remarkable child actor of the last sixty years and one of the loveliest and most enchanting children ever seen anywhere. To her captivating personality, and to her instinctive histrionic talent, judiciously fostered and elicited by Belasco, was due the success of the "double bill": it held the Lyceum stage until October 30, and thereafter was acted in many other cities. In New York the principal adult part, that of the *Burglar*, was assumed by E. H. Sothern: "on the road" it was played by William Gillette.

### "PAWN TICKET 910."

Another venture, made in 1887, that was important to Belasco, was the production, by his friend of early days, the fay-like little Lotta, of a play



which he wrote for her in collaboration with Clay M. Greene, entitled "Pawn Ticket 210." In the summer of that year, after those authors had submitted their play to her, Lotta expressed herself as favorably impressed by it but as being doubtful as to whether the public would care for her in its central character, which contains some touches of serious feeling. "I play and dance and sing," she said, "and that seems to be about all my audience expects of me." Her interest in the piece, however, finally overcame her hesitation; she agreed to buy it outright, for \$5,000, and produce it, provided that Belasco would direct the rehearsals. To that stipulation he readily consented; a first payment of \$2,500 was made, and the play was prepared for public representation on the stage of the Lyceum, immediately prior to the rehearsals there of "The Great Pink Pearl" and "Editha's Burglar": it was first acted at McVicker's Theatre, Chicago, September 12, 1887.

"Pawn Ticket 210" is a melodrama, in four acts, based in part on an idea in the novel of "Court Royal," by Baring-Gould, and containing two characters derived therefrom. The story is extravagant to the point of absurdity. The mother of an infant girl, being in desperate need of money, leaves her babe with a Jewish pawnbroker, as security for a



loan of \$30, and then disappears. The child, *Mag*, attains to young womanhood and is about to be, practically, forced into marriage with the old pawnbroker, *Uncle Harris*, who holds her as "collateral," when her mother returns and, with the assistance of a youth named *Saxe*, redeems the girl and provides for her happiness. Spectators of this amazing medley might well have been puzzled to divine its purpose, since they were at one moment required to contemplate scenes of violence and bloodshed and the next were regaled with the capers of burlesque,—Lotta, abandoning all endeavor at serious portrayal of character, skipping over barrels, frisking upon tables, kicking off her slippers, grimacing, dancing, and singing as only Lotta could.

That play was greeted by the writers for the Chicago newspapers with extreme and derisive censure. Belasco and Greene, reading the adverse reviews, were much disheartened and expected that Lotta would withdraw their play and revive one of her early and successful vehicles. "I had been in Chicago, for the dress rehearsal," writes Belasco, in a memorandum, "but my duties as stage manager at the Lyceum required me to return to New York before the first performance. The rehearsals hadn't been satisfactory to me. And when, on top of the scathing notices, I received a wire from Lotta



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[after "The Pearl" and "Editha's Burglar" had been produced] asking us to come out to Chicago again, I felt sure it meant that our play was to be dropped." When, however, in company with Greene, he called on the actress, his dismal forebodings were happily dispersed. "Don't pay any attention to the criticisms," admonished the sensible little Lotta; "I have just had word from my manager saying there is a line that extends around the block, trying to get to the box office. The house has been packed to the roof, at every performance. None of my plays has ever received good notices—but the public comes. We have a great big success in this piece!" Lotta's mother, who was present, by way of confirming this auspicious view, said, "We'll show you what *we* think of it," and forthwith handed to the delighted authors a check for the second payment of \$2,500,—although, writes Belasco, "it was a month ahead of the stipulated time." "Pawn Ticket 210" was the chief reliance of Lotta during the season of 1887-'88, and thereafter it was utilized by several of the various performers who sought to emulate her,—conspicuous among them Amy Lee. This is the cast of the original production at McVicker's:

*Mag*.....Lotta.  
*Uncle Harris*.....John Howson.





Photograph by Sarony.

Bela's Collection.

**LOTTA (CHARLOTTE CRABTREE)**  
About the time of "Pawn Ticket No. 210"







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<i>John Sternhold</i> .....	Charles L. Harris.
<i>Montague Flash</i> .....	G. C. Boniface.
<i>Charles Saxe</i> .....	Cyril Scott.
<i>Osiah Gregg</i> .....	J. W. Hague.
<i>Postman</i> .....	F. Waldo Parker.
<i>Ruth</i> .....	Augusta Raymond.
<i>Alice Sternhold</i> .....	Lilian Richardson.
<i>Aunt Dorothy</i> .....	Ernestine Floyd.

### "BARON RUDOLPH" AND GEORGE S. KNIGHT.

The continuous, energetic, productive industry of Belasco is further signified by the fact that during the interval between "The Highest Bidder" and "The Wife" (May to November, 1887) he found time to do an important piece of work in association with Bronson Howard. That author had, several years earlier, written a play for Mr. and Mrs. William J. Florence, called "Only a Tramp." Mrs. Florence was not satisfied with the part, *Nellie Dashwood*, designed for her, and the Florences, accordingly, rejected the play. In 1886 it was bought from Howard by George S. Knight (George Washington Sloan,—1850-1892), who chanced to meet Howard in London and to whom it was offered.

The play of "Baron Rudolph" (or "Rudolph," as, finally, it was denominated) is not a distinctive or important one, but it contains, chiefly as the result of Belasco's revision (it was earlier acted in



New York, as Howard left it, so this statement rests on direct comparison), effective elements of comedy and some amusing incidents and fluent dialogue. Knight was a competent comedian,—nothing more: he lacked personal magnetism, delicacy, and the rare and precious faculty of taste.

The story of the play is trite and it is artificial; it belongs to the category typified by "Struck Oil," in which James C. Williamson and his wife, "Maggie" Moore, were widely successful, many years ago, gaining a fortune with it. It depicts the vicissitudes and sufferings of a kind and loving, though weak and imprudent man, *Rudolph*, and of his wife and child. *Rudolph*, who has been prosperous, is pitifully poor, and his wife and their child are on the verge of starvation. The husband returns, slightly intoxicated, to their squalid abode, and the wife, stung to bitter resentment, leaves him, taking their child, and intent to earn a living by her own labor. In this purpose she succeeds, and after an interval of about two years she obtains a divorce from *Rudolph*,—who, meantime, has become a gin-sodden "tramp," abject and wretched,—and she weds a swindling scoundrel, the secret agent of *Rudolph's* ruin. That specious villain is detected, apprehended, and exposed as a forger, in the moment of the wretched *Rudolph's* accession to a fortune and



a baronetcy, in Germany, and then a scene of recognition and reconciliation ensues,—containing possibilities of pathetic effect,—between the wretched father, “only a tramp,” and his daughter. This story is jumbled with the wooing of a sprightly widow, named *Nellie Dashwood*, a sort of *Mrs. General Gilflory* (in “The Mighty Dollar”); an attempted burglary; a secondary story about two very young lovers, and a tedious tangle of literal detail and “outward flourishes.”

Persons who care to observe how disruption wrought by poverty, suffering, and weakness, in the home of an affectionate husband, wife and child, can be treated with poignant dramatic effect should study the old play of “*Belphegor*; or, The Mountebank,”—in which, as *Belphegor*, Charles Dillon gave one of the most beautiful and touching performances it has ever been my fortune to see. The triumphant use of such material can also be studied in the late Charles Klein’s “The Music Master,” as augmented, rectified, and produced by Belasco, with David Warfield in its central part, *Herr von Barwig*. When revived, as altered and amended by Belasco, “*Rudolph*” was handsomely set on the stage, but Knight’s method of dressing and acting the principal part ruined any chance of success which it might have had.



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Knight became infatuated with the part of the *Tramp*, and he produced "Rudolph," for the first time, in the Fall of 1886, at the Academy of Music, Cleveland. In 1887 Howard rewrote the play—receiving, as I understood, \$3,000 for doing so,—and it was then produced at Hull, England, with Knight and his wife as stars, supported by members of Wilson Barrett's company, from the Princess' Theatre, London. In its revised form it was called "Baron Rudolph." Knight was still dissatisfied with the structure of it, and, returning to America, desired that Howard should again revise it, but this Howard was unable to do, being preoccupied with labor on "The Henrietta," for Robson and Crane (that play was produced for the first time at the Union Square Theatre, September 26, 1887), but, at his request, Belasco undertook a second revision. "My object," he said, "was to do the work as nearly as possible in Howard's way, and I must have succeeded pretty well, because when I took the script to him he said: 'You've caught my style, exactly!' And he would not allow the piece to be produced as 'By Bronson Howard'; he insisted that I should have public credit as a co-author." In its final form it bore Howard's second title, "Baron Rudolph," and, under the direction of Charles Frohman, representing Knight, and the stage management of



Belasco, it was produced at the Fourteenth Street Theatre, New York, on October 24, 1887. "There was the chance for an immense popular success and a fortune in the piece," Belasco said to me, "but Knight threw it all away. He insisted on 'making-up' *Rudolph*, the tramp, in such a literal, dirty, repulsive manner that, in the recognition scene where the girl learns he is her father and has to embrace and kiss him, the audience, instead of being sympathetic, was disgusted. We argued and entreated with Knight: I told him, over and over and over, what would happen. But he couldn't, or he wouldn't, see it—and it happened!" The play failed, utterly; it was kept on the stage for four weeks and then withdrawn. Knight, first and last, lost a modest fortune on that play, and its ultimate failure broke him down. He and his wife went on a tour, after ending their engagement at the Fourteenth Street Theatre, in an early success of theirs, a farce called "Over the Garden Wall," but Knight's brain was affected; within a few months he suffered a shock of paralysis, and, on July 14, 1892, after much suffering, he died, in Philadelphia. During his illness he was maintained and cared for, with exemplary devotion, by his wife.

This was the cast of "Baron Rudolph," at the Fourteenth Street Theatre:



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<i>Rudolph</i> .....	George S. Knight.
<i>Whetworth</i> .....	Frank Carlyle.
<i>Rhoda</i> .....	Carrie Turner.
<i>Owen</i> .....	Lin Hurst.
<i>Sheriff</i> .....	Frank Colfax.
<i>Ernestine</i> .....	Jane Stuart.
<i>General Metcalf</i> .....	Charles Bowser.
<i>Judge Merrybone</i> .....	M. A. Kennedy.
<i>Geoffrey Brown</i> .....	Henry Woodruff.
<i>Allen</i> .....	George D. Fawcett.
<i>Nellie Dashwood</i> .....	Mrs. George S. Knight.

### "THE WIFE."

When, in the preceding May, "The Highest Bidder" had been successfully launched, Daniel Frohman, intending the establishment of a permanent stock company at the Lyceum Theatre, began, with Belasco, consideration of plays that might be suitable for production, in the next season, and of actors whom it might prove expedient and feasible to engage for the projected company. No play that seemed to them suitable was found, and Mr. Frohman presently suggested that Belasco should write one. Belasco, somewhat unwillingly,—because of the responsibility involved,—agreed to do so; but while in conference with Mr. Frohman Henry De Mille chanced to enter the office where they were, and the manager, conscious of Belasco's hesitancy, suggested that he should undertake the



new play in collaboration with De Mille. To this Belasco eagerly agreed, and that was the beginning of a long and agreeable association. The co-workers soon repaired to De Mille's summer home, at Echo Lake, and began work on a play which at first they called "The Marriage Tie," but which eventually was named "The Wife,"—not a felicitous choice of title, because it had been several times previously used, and, in particular, has long been identified with the excellent comedy of that name by James Sheridan Knowles (1784-1862), first produced in 1833, at Covent Garden, London, and throughout many years by various stars or stock companies in our Theatre. Belasco has written the following account of the manner in which their play of "The Wife" was constructed by De Mille and himself:

**"A COMMON-SENSE HUSBAND."**

"At last, after many plots were cast aside, I hit upon an idea. In my varied experience as dramatist and stage manager I had produced many so-called society plays in which the wife was either guilty of unfaithfulness or had committed an indiscretion. In the 'big' scene it was the conventional thing for the husband to enter the room at midnight, and say to the woman: 'Of course, after all that has happened, I must get a divorce.' Then he threw legal documents on the desk, and said: 'Here are the deeds to the house. All necessary provisions have been made for you and



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the child. But for the sake of society, etc., etc., we will continue to dwell under the same roof for a while.'

"'Let us have a common-sense husband,' I proposed to De Mille. 'After the husband's discovery, let him treat his wife in a perfectly sane, human way. Let him say: "You need me. Turn to me, for your protection!"' I had treated a similar situation in a play which ran in opposition to Bronson Howard's 'The Banker's Daughter' at Baldwin's Theatre in San Francisco. [The play was "The Millionaire's Daughter."]

"Mr. De Mille agreed with me that we should use the idea of this husband as the basis of our Lyceum drama. I knew my ground, for I had gained my knowledge through experience. And, as we were to see, that incident saved 'The Wife' in its hour of need. It has kept the play alive all these years and made it one of our most popular stock pieces. Before De Mille and I began the play we had virtually written our Third Act, jotting down notes and flashes of dialogue. Then we went to Mr. Frohman with our idea, and in that conference the Lyceum Theatre Company was born. In fact, it came into being before the play, and De Mille and I found ourselves obliged to create characters to fit the personalities of the players Mr. Frohman had engaged. We could not say: 'Here is our heroine. Find an actress to suit her'—for Georgia Cayvan was to be the leading lady, whatever the play might be, and it was for us to see that she had a womanly woman's part. . . .

"In the early part of May we began our race against time; night and day found us turning out experimental pages of dialogue. Every week we came to the city for a few hours, to see how the scenes of the play were progressing—for that was another condition imposed upon us—to decide upon the location of our acts before they were written.



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In those days audiences would not have been content with repetitions of scenes such as we now employ.

"With what eagerness did Mr. Frohman wait our visits to the city and listen to the new scenes! Towards the latter part of August we had completed a five-act drama, which we handed in with the understanding that it might be cut, revised and rewritten. We told Mr. Frohman that if it did not come up to expectations there was time for him to look elsewhere for a play.

"It must have been after the reading of the Third Act that Mr. Frohman's office door opened and he rushed out crying: 'By Jove, it's fine, it's splendid!' De Mille and I didn't stop. We hurried to the station and were off to Echo Lake for our vacation. . . ."

The play of "The Wife" is in five acts and it involves fourteen persons. Its scenes are laid in Newport, New York, and Washington, D. C., about 1887. Its dialogue is written in that strain of commonplace colloquy which is assumed, with justice, to be generally characteristic of "fashionable society" in its superficial mood and ordinary habit. The influence of Bronson Howard's example is obvious in it,—that writer's plan, which had been successful, of catching and reflecting the general tone and manner of "everyday life" and often of distressingly "everyday persons"; persons who, nevertheless, are at times constrained to behave in a manner not easily credible, if, indeed, possible, whether in everyday or any other kind of life. To copy



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commonplaces in a commonplace manner is by some judges deemed the right and sure way to please the public. That method does often succeed, since, generally, people like to see themselves. This, however, was not the method of the great masters of comedy, such as Molière, Congreve, and Sheridan, who taught, by example and with results of great value, that a comedy, while it should be a true reflection of life and a faithful picture of manners, should also be made potent over the mind, the heart, and the imagination, by delicate, judicious exaggeration, should be made entertaining by equivoque, and should be made impressive by the fibre of strong thought, and sympathetic by trenchant, sparkling dialogue. That old method of writing comedy, although it has been exemplified by the best writers and is still attempted, has, to a great extent, been superseded by the far inferior and much easier method of conventional colloquialism and chatter.

The ground plan of "The Wife," though Belasco may have thought it a novelty, was, even in 1887, mossy with antiquity. A girl, *Helen Freeman*, parts from her lover, *Robert Grey*, in a moment of pique, and weds with another man, to whom she gives her hand, but not at first her heart; she subsequently meets her old flame and finds that she is still fond of him; causes social tattle by being seen





From an old photograph.

Belasco's Collection.

DAVID BELASCO

CLAY M. GREENE

In 1887, when, in collaboration, they wrote "Pawn Ticket 210"  
for Lotta







too much in his company; admits to her husband that her juvenile partiality for this early suitor still lingers in her feelings, and so causes that worthy man some uneasiness; but she ends by casting her girlish fancy to the winds and avowing herself a fond as well as a faithful wife. "The guests think they have seen him before." They have! And also they have heard, rather more than twice before, two of the speeches which are uttered: "As a soldier it is my business to make widows," and "Hell has no fury like a woman scorned."

This is the story: *Helen Freeman* loved *Robert Grey* and by him was beloved. *Robert Grey* had jilted *Lucile Ferrant*, of New Orleans. *Lucile* informed *Helen* of this fact, and *Helen* therefore repudiated *Robert Grey* and wedded with *John Rutherford*, of the United States Senate. *Matthew Culver*, a politician, hostile to *Robert Grey* in politics and at the bar, and wishful to defeat *Robert's* attempt to obtain an office, persuaded *Lucile* to apprise *Rutherford* that *Robert* and *Helen* had been lovers, and by many persons were thought to be so still. *Rutherford*, investigating this tale, discovered that *Culver* had maliciously and meanly schemed to make mischief and that the attachment of *Robert* and *Helen* was probably one of the sentimental "flames" which are customary in youth;



whereupon he rebuked *Culver*, talked frankly with *Robert Grey*, advising him to stick to his legal business, and presently procured his appointment to a lucrative office, at the same time assuring *Helen* of his delicate consideration for her feelings and his intention to take good care of her. *Culver* then went to South America and stayed there, while *Miss Ferrant* repaired to the South of France, and *Robert Grey* greatly distinguished himself by laborious diligence in the public service. This adjustment might have been expected to content all parties concerned, but it did not content *Rutherford*. His wife actually had "loved another" before she loved him, and on that fact he brooded, stating that his heart contained nothing but "bloodless ashes." Perhaps *Helen's* sentimental fancy had lasted. Juvenile flame was only a phrase. As sagaciously remarked by *Emilia* in "Othello,"

". . . jealous souls will not be answered so;  
They are not ever jealous for the cause,  
But jealous for they're jealous."

The distressed *Senator*, therefore, sat up till a late hour every night, grieving for his wife's "lost love," until at last *Helen*, observing his dejection, was moved to discover and avouch that her juvenile fancy for *Robert Grey* had been a girlish infatua-



tion and to declare her "calm, peaceful, and eternal love" for her husband. *Mr. and Mrs. Rutherford* then sailed, aboard the *Alaska*, for Europe. It appeared, incidentally, that *Jack Dexter* and *Kitty Ives*, giddy things, though bright and good, hovering about the story, were lovers, but that *Kitty's* mother did not approve of their engagement till after *Jack* had smirched his face with a bit of smoked glass, and also that all the persons concerned in these momentous affairs once saw an eclipse of the sun, which was visible in Washington.

Almost every person in this play is colorless and insignificant. The proceedings of the characters evince no natural sequence between motive and conduct. Given two young persons who love each other, they could not possibly be alienated by conjuring up the bugbear of a previous attachment. Nothing is so dead as the love that has died, and every lover instinctively knows it. Moreover, the ladies, practically without exception, are more pleased than disquieted by discovering that their lovers have found they could live without others but not without them. The fabric, in short, is one of elaborate trifling with serious things, for the sake of situations and effects. The play should have been called "The Husband" rather than "The Wife," because it is *Rutherford* in whom the



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interest centres. The best scene in it is the one of explanation and reconciliation between the husband and wife, and this was the invention of Belasco, around which and for the sake of which the play was written. It contains a strain of rational, fine manliness that wins and holds attentive sympathy.

In studying the plays written by Belasco and De Mille in collaboration it is essential to bear in mind the apportionment of the labor, in order correctly to estimate Belasco's share in them. The writing in that co-partnership was largely done by De Mille: the dramatic machinery, the story in action, was supplied almost entirely by Belasco, who acted the scenes, when the plays were in process of construction, the dialogue being beaten out between the co-workers.

This was the original cast of "The Wife",—  
November 1, 1887:

<i>Hon. John Rutherford</i> .....	Herbert Kelcey.
<i>Robert Grey</i> .....	Henry Miller.
<i>Matthew Culver</i> .....	Nelson Wheatcroft.
<i>Silas Truman</i> .....	Charles Walcot.
<i>Major Homer</i> .....	William J. LeMoynes.
<i>Jack Dexter</i> .....	Charles S. Dickson.
<i>Helen Truman, Mrs. Rutherford</i> .....	Georgia Cayvan.
<i>Lucile Ferrant</i> .....	Grace Henderson.
<i>Mrs. Bellamy Ives</i> .....	Mrs. Charles Walcot.
<i>Mrs. Amory</i> .....	Mrs. Thomas Whiffen.



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*Agnes*.....Vida Croly.  
*Mr. Randolph*.....W. Clark Bellows.  
*Kitty Ives*.....Louise Dillon.

"The Wife" was so beautifully set, so perfectly directed, and so well acted that, though at first the dead weight of the play oppressed its representation, the public press, even at the first, inclined to accord it an importance which it did not deserve. Georgia Cayvan's impersonation of the wife revealed anew the deep feeling and the graceful art that had won her recognition as a favorite actress. Grace Henderson (she was the wife of David Henderson, critical writer and producer of musical extravaganza), who acted the mischief making, jilted woman, *Lucile*, played with discretion and sincerity,—but it was difficult for the spectator to believe that a woman with a face so beautiful and a voice so delicious would ever have been jilted by any man not blind and deaf. Henry Miller was loud and extravagant as *Grey*; Herbert Kelcey was dignified, manly, and fine in feeling and elegant in manner and movement as *Rutherford*, and LeMoynes was delightfully humorous as *Major Homer*.

"The Wife" received 289 consecutive performances. Yet the fate of that play hung, for some time, in the balance. "I knew, even before the pro-



duction," said Belasco to me, "that it was too long and too loosely jointed, but I felt it could make good; and Mr. Frohman had faith. De Mille was pretty well discouraged after a week or ten days, and he told me he expected he'd have to go back to school-teaching [De Mille had been a school-teacher before he joined the Madison Square Theatre, where, in 1884, Belasco first met him]. Brent Good, proprietor of Carter's Little Liver Pills, and also Stickney protested, in a directors' meeting, that the play was a failure and was losing money and ordered it withdrawn." The next morning Daniel Frohman instructed Belasco to put the play of "Featherbrain," by James Albery, into rehearsal and prepare it for production as rapidly as possible. "I felt certain," Belasco has told me, "that 'The Wife' could be made a great money-getter, and I resolved it should have a fair trial: I held back on the preparations of 'Featherbrain' all I could,—and, meantime, De Mille and I altered and cut, day after day, on our play. This procedure was justified by the result. Writing on this subject, Belasco declares: "It seemed to us that for every word we cut from 'The Wife' we gained a person in the orchestra." What a pity the necessary pruning and adjustment could not have been done before the production! Then the prosperity



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of a theatre and of many persons would not have been endangered. The sum of more than \$50,000, owed to the Tiffany Studios, was paid in full, out of the profits of "The Wife," and the directors of the corporation, as also Daniel Frohman, were so well satisfied with the ultimate result that Belasco and De Mille were commissioned to write the next new play required, for the following season, which was to be one constructed as a starring vehicle for Edward H. Sothorn, who had been "inherited" by the Lyceum management under a contract with Helen Dauvray.

### REVISION OF "SHE."

The first dramatic work done by Belasco, after he had dismissed "The Wife," was a revision of a drama called "She," made by William H. Gillette on the basis of Rider Haggard's novel of that name. This was produced, November 29, 1887, at Niblo's Garden, New York, by Isaac B. Rich and Al. Hayman.

The signal talent of Haggard is not well displayed in "She,"—in which the tone is sensual and the literary art inferior, and in which, indeed, it can fairly be said that the author has collected materials and outlined a plan for a work of fiction, rather than that he has adequately utilized his



materials and plan. There is in it little indication of distinctive intellectual character or of scrutinizing artistic revision, and, although contemporary with both Worcester's and Webster's "Unabridged," the writer frequently informs his readers that words are wanting to describe the objects he has undertaken to portray. "She," therefore, notwithstanding that it contains attributes of merit, is, as Haggard left it, a verbose and chaotic narrative, presenting the apotheosis of woman as a handsome animal. The story, however, presents melodramatic points tributary to situation and several of those points were utilized for stage presentment and invested with picturesque scenery. The play begins with a shipwreck on the coast of Africa. "Set waves" swung on obvious cordage. A "profile" boat went to pieces on a rock. Lightnings flashed. A quantity of real water was projected into the air. And a band of adventurous seekers after the inscrutable and awful female personality known as *She* were rescued, to pass through manifold adventures, including encounters with African cannibals and terminating with a quest for the Fire of Life, in which, when found, the mystical *Princess* was destroyed. Particular recital of the incidents of the stage adaptation is not requisite here: the novel, extraordinarily pop-



ular in its day, is still accessible to the curious. The form adopted by Gillette in framing his histrionic synopsis of the book is that of genuine, old-fashioned melodrama,—the form of theatrical spectacle interblended with music that was in fashion a century ago. There is an opening chorus. African savages, auxiliary to the proceedings, chant. The heroine woos her favorite in a melodious adjuration, and bursts into song on her lover's breast. Music is introduced in the most unlikely places. Even the cannibals utter their stomachs in harmonious howls, preparatory to a feast on the flesh of man. "She," as adapted by Gillette, was in part reconstructed and improved by Belasco, to whom such curious fabrics of more or less ridiculous spectacle had been familiar in his early days and who readily rectified its technical defects. "It was simply a matter of curtailings and readjusting," he afterward wrote; "when the scenes and situations were rehearsed again it was found that we had a very good play": the accuracy of the latter statement, of course, depends on the standard of merit applied in determining what constitutes a "good play." Belasco did not revise "She" until near the end of the New York engagement, that is, about the middle of December, 1887. The play was transferred from New York to the Hollis Street



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Theatre, Boston, and there, and elsewhere in the country, it was prosperously presented.

"LORD CHUMLEY" AND E. H. SOTHERN.

During the early part of 1888 Belasco did some work as a teacher of acting, bestowing, at the request of Daniel Frohman, special attention on instruction of Mrs. James G. Blaine, Jr. (Mary Nevin), a person of social influence—and therefore potentially valuable to the management of the Lyceum Theatre—whose aspirations for a theatrical career were terminated by serious illness. Toward Spring the necessity of executing the commission to write a new play for the use of Sothern, at the Lyceum, compelled Belasco to lay aside all other labor, and, about March-April, in company with De Mille, he repaired to Echo Lake, and there, after trying and rejecting many dramatic schemes, the co-mates in authorship finally hit upon one to their liking. By about July 1 (1888) they had practically completed a new play, entitled "Lord Chumley," and they returned to New York in order that Belasco might put it into rehearsal. In doing this he had to confront an unexpected difficulty: Sothern, who had expressed himself as satisfied on reading the scenario of the play, did not like the part of *Chumley* in the fin-



ished work and, as Mr. Frohman informed the disgruntled authors, was averse to undertaking it. Belasco writes of this: "'But the character's Sothern,' I said; 'every look, gesture, and exclamation fits him like a glove!' . . . Of course, it was the old story all over again; an actor never knows what is best suited to him." The latter notion is, I think, extravagant: for every instance wherein an actor has made a notable success in playing a part against his judgment and will a dozen could be cited wherein the actor has known his powers and made his distinctive success by following his own judgment in selection of the part to be played. "You are mistaken," Charles Burke told a friend, who had exclaimed to him, in a burst of admiration, "You don't know what a good actor you are!", "I know *exactly* what a good actor I am, and *exactly* what I can do on the stage." Sothern, as his later career has shown, cherished ambition to act parts of a very different character from *Chumley*, but, fortunately for all concerned, he consented to undertake that part, after Belasco had expounded it to him; the rehearsals were carried on with diligence and, on August 21, 1888, "Lord Chumley" was produced, for the first time anywhere, at the Lyceum Theatre.

The play of "Lord Chumley" is a mosaic of many



old dramatic situations, culled from various earlier plays, revamped and intercalated so as to make a sequent story, and it can rightly be designated a comedy, tinged with melodrama and farce. *Chumley* is a young English lord, a gentleman by nature as well as birth; simple, generous, sincere, intrepid, and acute, but hampered by shyness, an impediment in his speech, and a superficial aspect of inanity. He impoverishes himself in order to serve a friend, *Hugh Butterworth*, an imprudent young fellow, an officer in the British Army, who is being victimized by a specious French rascal. This malignant person wishes to wed the officer's sister, *Miranda*, and by threatening to ruin that young man's reputation has extorted from her a promise of marriage. The lady is beloved by *Chumley*, who intervenes and prevents the marriage, incidentally vindicating himself in her opinion: she has at first believed him to be a fool and later a blackguard, but she ends by perceiving his intrinsically fine character and reciprocating his love. In the course of his variegated experience he contrives to make himself misunderstood in attempting to tell his troubles to a sympathetic spinster; he dwells without repining in the squalor of a miserable lodging, to which his generous self-impoverishment has reduced him; he confronts a desperate



burglar in the dark and, armed only with a cigarette-holder shaped like a pistol, he fools, cows, and overcomes him; he exhibits astounding physical prowess in conflict with a burly antagonist, and he displays amazing mental acuteness in penetrating and defeating the malevolent purposes of a villain.

Belasco, writing of himself and his co-worker De Mille, says: "For a month we talked over Soth-ern's play without a single idea. At this time [1887-'88] pistol cigarette-holders came into fashion. I bought one in the village [near Echo Lake] to amuse the De Mille children, but forgot to take it out of my hip pocket. The next day as De Mille and I were out walking in the snow I leaned against a tree, drew the toy pistol from my pocket, and called out: 'Stand and deliver,' and in a flash the foolish situation gave us the first idea for what was afterward called 'Chumley.' We used this serio-comic situation in our Second Act, where *Chumley* holds a real thief at bay with his cigarette-case." That, no doubt, is a correct account of the "first idea"; others came from Belasco's ample store of recollections. *Chumley*, as a character, is a remote variant of the elder Soth-ern's *Dundreary*, superimposed on H. J. Byron's *Sir Simon Simple*, in "Not Such a Fool as He Looks,"—which was



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written for Charles Mathews. In the development of the plot in which he is implicated and the treatment of the character there is much reminiscence—touches of *John Mildmay*, in his scene with *Captain Hawksley*, in “Still Waters Run Deep”; of *Harry Jasper*, in “A Bachelor of Arts”; of *Sir Bashful Constant*, *Arthur Chilton*, *Mr. Toots*, and, in particular, *Elliott Gray*, in his scene with *Myles McKenna*, in “Rosedale.” All the situations indicated have long been used as common property. The merit of the play consists in the effectiveness with which those situations are employed and in the bright, fluent, and generally telling dialogue with which they are interfused. *Chumley* is an extremely long part. Sothern’s performance was exceptionally good, and it was received by public and press with copious approbation. The success of the play was unequivocal: it held the stage till November 11. On November 18 Pinero’s “Sweet Lavender” succeeded it, but with the production of that excellent drama at the Lyceum Belasco had, practically, nothing to do: “Sweet Lavender” was sent to New York from London and was “put on” in exact accordance with the prompt-copy as prepared by the author when making Edward Terry’s presentment of it.



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This was the original cast of "Lord Chumley,"  
at the Lyceum:

<i>Adam Butterworth</i> .....	C. B. Bishop.
<i>Lieut. Hugh Butterworth</i> .....	Frank Carlyle.
<i>Gasper Le Sage</i> .....	Herbert Archer.
<i>Tommy Tucker</i> .....	Rowland Buckstone.
<i>Blink Bank</i> .....	George Backus.
<i>Winterbottom</i> .....	A. W. Gregory.
<i>Eleanor</i> .....	Belle Archer.
<i>Jessie Deane</i> .....	Dora Leslie.
<i>Lady Alexander Barker</i> .....	Fannie Addison.
<i>Meg</i> .....	Etta Hawkins.
<i>Miranda</i> .....	Rosa Stark.
<i>Lord George Cholmondeley (known as "Chumley")</i>	E. H. Sothern.

### "THE KAFFIR DIAMOND."

In the period from August 21, 1888, to November 19, 1889, Belasco's labors were many and various. As soon as "Lord Chumley" had been produced, and while yet he was engaged, as customary with him, in smoothing and improving that new venture, he began work, for Louis Aldrich, on revision of a play by Edward J. Swartz, called "The Kaffir Diamond," which had been written for Aldrich, as a starring vehicle. That play is a wild and whirling kaleidoscopic melodrama, devised for the pleasure of those theatre-goers who seek entertainment in extravagant situations and violent,



tumultuous actions,—a play of the class typified by “The Gambler’s Fate; or, The Doomed House,” “The Lonely Man of the Ocean,” “The King of the Opium Ring,” etc.,—and Belasco’s work on it must have caused him to remember, perhaps with amusement, his fabrication of many similar “shockers,” in his early San Francisco and Virginia City days. The central character of “The Kaffir Diamond,” a person named *Shoulders*, is a misanthropical drunkard, made so by suffering, who inhabits a miasmatic swamp, in Africa, subsisting largely on liquor and the hope of revenge. This person believes himself to have been robbed, in days of prosperity, of wife and daughter, by a *Colonel* in the British Army, and, in seeking for revenge, he nearly effects the ruin of a woman who proves to be his long-lost daughter, and he succeeds in confining the detested *Colonel* in the poisonous swamp, where he intends that he shall miserably perish, only to discover that, instead of being his wronger, that gallant soldier is his best friend. Blended with this plot, or, rather, tangled into it, is a double-barrelled love story, the theft of a diamond of priceless worth, and a medley of incidents incorporative of brawling, lynching, and miscellaneous riot. Aldrich, as *Shoulders*, personated in a surprisingly simple manner the wretched victim of weak character, strong drink,



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misfortune, and mistaken enmity, giving a performance which, while devoid of imaginative quality, was nevertheless effective, because of the innate sturdy manliness of the actor and of his artistically rough evincement of strong emotion blended with human weakness. This was the cast:

<i>Shoulders</i> .....	Louis Aldrich.
<i>Robert Douglas</i> .....	M. J. Jordan.
<i>Downey Dick</i> .....	Joseph A. Wilkes.
<i>Bye-Bye</i> .....	Johnny Booker.
<i>Col. Richard Grantley</i> .....	Fraser Coulter.
<i>Walter Douglas</i> .....	Charles Mackay.
<i>Sergt. Tim Meehan</i> .....	Charles Bowser.
<i>Millicent Douglas</i> .....	Dora Goldthwaite.
<i>Alice Rodney</i> .....	Isabelle Evesson.
<i>Sanderson</i> .....	J. H. Hutchinson.
<i>Orderly</i> .....	William McCloy.
<i>Courier</i> .....	M. C. Williams.
<i>Mme. Biff</i> .....	Adele Palma.

Belasco participated in the work of placing "The Kaffir Diamond" on the stage, receiving a payment of \$300, and on September 11, 1888, it was acted, in a handsome setting, at the Broadway Theatre, New York, but it was unsuccessful and it lasted only till October 13.

### LOUIS ALDRICH.

Louis Aldrich (1848-1901) was a good actor. He was a Hebrew, a native of Ohio, and his true



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name was Lyon. In childhood he was known on the stage as Master Moses, and also as Master McCarthy. His first appearance was made, September, 1855, at Cleveland, Ohio, as *Glo'ster*, in scenes from "King Richard III." He performed with the Marsh Juvenile Comedians, beginning in 1858, for about five years. His last professional appearance occurred, March 25, 1899, at the New York Academy of Music, as *Colonel Swift*, in Anson Pond's play of "Her Atonement." His most striking performance was that of *Joe Saunders*, in Bartley Campbell's "My Partner," first produced at the Union Square Theatre, New York, September 16, 1879. Belasco, long afterward (1900-'01), arranged to have Aldrich star in that play, under his management, but the ill-health of the actor compelled abandonment of the plan. The death of Aldrich, caused by apoplexy, occurred at Kennebunkport, Maine, June 17, 1901.

### THE SCHOOL OF ACTING.

During most of the time of his association with the Lyceum Theatre (1886-1890) Belasco incidentally labored as an instructor in the School of Acting, founded by Steele Mackaye, and conducted in connection with that theatre, and he achieved some



excellent results. Being a teacher, his view of the importance of the school is, I believe, somewhat exaggerated, and also he mistakenly supposes, or seems to suppose, that all instructors can be as successful in their histrionic tuition as he has frequently been. His recollections of this part of his activity, when associated with the Lyceum Theatre School, have been interestingly written by himself, as follows:

"During the early days of my association with Mr. Frohman at the Lyceum Theatre much of my time was occupied with my duties in connection with Franklin Sargent's Dramatic School. Mr. Sargent had leased the classroom, hall and stage, which Steele Mackaye had designed when the Lyceum Theatre was built. I am very proud to give the names of some of the pupils who made up my classes: Alice Fischer, Blanche Walsh, Charles Bellows, Maude Banks, George Fawcett, Harriet Ford, Emma Sheridan, Dorothy Dorr, Wilfred Buckland, George Foster Platt, Jennie Eustace, Grace Kimball, Cora Maynard, William Ordway Partridge, Robert Taber, Lincoln Wagnalls, E. Wales Winter, White Whittlesey, and Edith Chapman. *This list stands as a refutation of the statement that the school of acting is not of benefit in preparing for the stage. . . .*

"A graphic picture of Robert Taber's successful and almost superhuman effort to overcome his physical disadvantages will remain with me always. One day, as I sat in my studio, he limped in—pale, delicate—almost an invalid in appearance. An illness in childhood had left



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him with a shortened leg, so that he was obliged to wear a shoe with a sole at least two inches thick. After introducing himself, he told me of his ambition. 'Do you think I can possibly become an actor with these?' he asked, pointing to his bent knee and drooping shoulder. The tragic pathos in his face aroused my sympathy and I asked him to read to me. All his selections were from the old classics, which he loved,—like many another youth I have met, with the spell of the stage upon him. So he read to me scenes from 'King Richard III,' 'Julius Cæsar,' and 'Romeo and Juliet.' His reading was distinct, his interpretations spirited. A flash of genius ran through the fibre of the boy; there was strength and impressiveness in his delivery. He was thoroughly exhausted when he had finished, and I was in a quandary. 'Surely I can't lengthen his leg,' I thought; 'yet he wants to play juvenile leads; he wants to play *Romeo*!' I saw at once that Robert Taber was not fitted to be a pantaloon actor, a parlor figure, for there was a flourish and breadth to his style of delivery that dedicated him to the costume play.

"He must have seen the perplexity in my face, for he said: 'Mr. Belasco, I can raise \$20,000, which you can have if you will help me. You have assisted stammerers?' I couldn't tell him that a limp was a different matter. Nevertheless, I resolved to see what I could do for him. 'I'll not take a cent of your money,' I said, 'but if you will do as I tell you, we'll see what can be done.' He agreed and there followed a regular campaign against a limp. It was my idea to eliminate the defect through exercises. He worked faithfully. He walked, he lay on his back, practising stretching exercises; he studied the balancing of his body, throwing the weight so that his short leg could be brought down slowly to the floor, without any



perceptible stooping of the shoulders. I had a shoe made, with a deep inner sole, to take the place of the unsightly shoe he wore when he first called upon me. After a year of daily work, when he was ready to enter the school of acting, his limp was so slight that it was barely perceptible! When he became leading man for Julia Marlowe, whom he afterwards married, who could have detected his deformity? His is a most remarkable instance, and I have often recalled it. For it is an example of what ambition and perseverance can accomplish, but few artists would be willing to practise the self-denial and go through such rigorous training." [Robert Taber was born in Staten Island, New York, in 1865, and he died, of consumption, in the Adirondacks, in 1904.—W. W.]

THE TRUE SCHOOL IS THE STAGE.

Observation has convinced me that, while the accomplishments of elocution, dancing, fencing, deportment, and the art of making up the face (all of which are highly useful on the stage) can be, and are, well taught in some Schools of Acting, the one true, thoroughly efficient school, the *only* one in which the art actually can be acquired, is the Stage itself. A master of stage direction, as Belasco is, can direct novices in rehearsals, and, *if they possess natural histrionic capability*, can, in that way, materially help to prepare them for the Stage; but they cannot, in that way, be taught to act. An indispensable part of any dramatic per-



formance is an audience: without it, a novice cannot learn to act, nor will it suffice to have an occasional audience. The decisive ground for objection to the Schools of Acting, moreover, is that, practically without exception, they are merely commercial enterprises: they accept, regardless of aptitude, every student who applies, because they want the fees. Belasco names nineteen pupils who studied under him, some of whom have become proficient actors. No doubt others could be named. What then? Belasco is a highly exceptional instance of an accomplished, enthusiastic, practical instructor, possessing the exceedingly rare faculty of communicating knowledge. "I'll not take a cent of your money," he told Taber. How many other instructors in acting are as scrupulous? Belasco applied the method of actual stage management to the instruction of the stage beginners, and, in some instances, with good effect; but it is to be remembered that every one of his pupils who has since succeeded as an actor (and not by any means all of them have) would have succeeded as well, or better, if employed in the first place in minor capacities in actual companies; and that against the number of graduates from Schools of Acting who have been successful in the Theatre should be set the much larger number of graduates—never men-



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tioned—who, having studied in those schools, paid for tuition and expended time, have never been able to act or even to earn a dollar in the Theatre.

### A REVIVAL OF "ELECTRA."

After producing "The Kaffir Diamond," and during the run of "Sweet Lavender," Belasco devoted himself assiduously to The Academy of Dramatic Art (that being the correct name of the institution, which, earlier, had been called The New York School of Acting), where, in association with Franklin H. Sargent, who was the official head of the school, and De Mille, he prepared an English version of the "Electra" of Sophocles. This was presented at the Lyceum Theatre, on March 11, 1889, by students of the Academy, and it was received with favor.

Writing about this production, Belasco says:

"The pupils of the Sargent School entered with great enthusiasm into the preparations for our school productions, and we have had many notable successes. I believe I am safe in saying that one of these, the 'Electra' of Sophocles, was the most remarkable exhibition of amateur art ever seen in this country. It was so accurate, so scholarly, so classical in every respect, that we were invited to present it before the students of Harvard University, as an illustration of the beauty and strength of

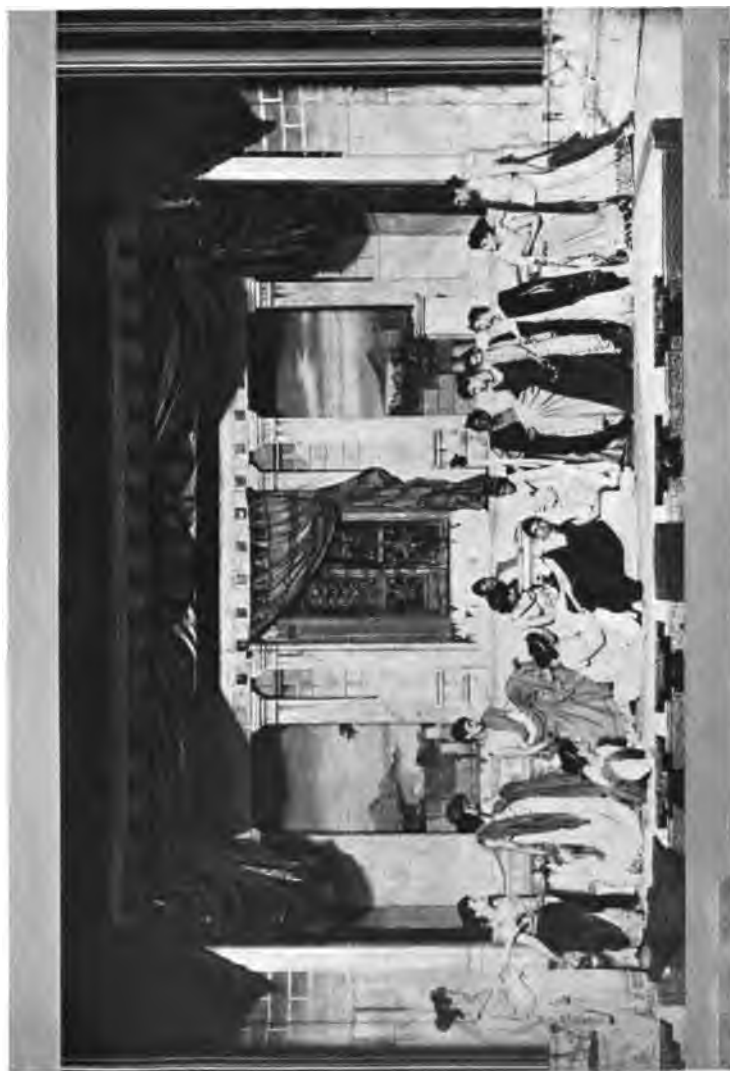


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ancient dramatic literature. The faculty and students were enthusiastic in its praise, and we felt highly honored that such distinction had been conferred upon us. I understood then that it was the first time in the history of Harvard that an amateur company had been transferred from another city."

On the occasion of that amateurs' performance of "Electra" at the Lyceum the stage was divided into two sections, the rear portion being higher than that in front, and the latter being built out into the auditorium in somewhat the manner of the "apron" of the old-time theatres. This lower platform, in the centre of which stood an altar with a fire on it, was reserved for the *Chorus*. The persons represented in the tragedy stood or moved upon the elevated rear portion of the stage, which showed the entrance to a Grecian house, with a view of countryside visible to the left and to the right. Footlights were not employed, the higher level of the stage being suffused with strong, white light which clearly revealed the characters thereon depicted, while the *Chorus* was kept in Rembrandt-like shadow. That *Chorus* comprised nine young women, in classic Grecian array, who declaimed and sang commentary upon, and advice to, the persons of the play proper. It should be noted in passing that,—without extravagance and affectation,—all





Photograph by Byron.

Belasco's Collection.

A scene from the "Electra" of Sophocles, as produced by Belasco, at the old Lyceum Theatre,  
New York







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the much admired and highly extolled "modern novelties" of simplicity in stage settings and lighting displayed by Mr. Granville Barker, at Wallack's Theatre, in 1915, were used by Belasco, in presenting "*Electra*,"—twenty-eight years earlier! The principal parts in the Greek tragedy were thus cast:

<i>Electra</i> .....	Grace Hamilton.
<i>Clytemnestra</i> .....	Edith A. Chapman.
<i>Ægisthus</i> .....	Percy West.
<i>Orestes</i> .....	White Whittlesey.

### MANY NEW TASKS.

Concurrent with his work in connection with the amateur presentment of the Greek tragedy Belasco had also prepared for Daniel Frohman's stage a revival of Sardou's "*Ferréol*," produced at the Union Square Theatre, March 21, 1876. Under the name of "*The Marquis*," and under Belasco's stage direction, it was acted at the Lyceum Theatre, by the stock company of that house, on March 18, 1889, but it proved a failure. It was withdrawn after one week, and on March 29 a revival was effected there of "*The Wife*,"—with the original cast, except that Louise Dillon succeeded Vida Croly as *Agnes*. "*The Wife*" ran till May 18, when the Lyceum closed for the season. Belasco, however,



did not finish his work with the revival of that play. Mr. Gillette had made a drama of the novel of "Robert Elsmere," by Mrs. Humphry Ward, and, gratified by the assistance Belasco had rendered in the vivification of "She," he secured his services, with consent of the Lyceum management, as stage manager, to set that drama on the stage. This was accomplished, April 29, at the Union Square Theatre.

With the close of the season of 1888-'89 at the Lyceum, in May, Belasco found himself once more commissioned, in association with De Mille, to write a new play with which to open that theatre, the following season, and thus again under the painful necessity of producing a work of dramatic art not as a matter of artistic expression but under compulsion of necessity. This task seemed very formidable. He had worked hard. His health was impaired. His spirits were low. His physician had ordered that he should take a long rest. It is a good prescription, and doubtless, in most cases, it is the best that can be given; but few of the weary workers of the world can take advantage of it, and no workers are more strictly bound to incessant routine duty than those who wield the pen in service of the Theatre. In these unfavorable circumstances Belasco again repaired to the peaceful seclu-



sion of De Mille's home at Echo Lake, and there the two dramatists once more sought to strike a spark of inspiration into the tinder of dramatic material. The result of this confabulation was, eventually, the comedy of "The Charity Ball."

"THE CHARITY BALL"

With regard to the question as to what subjects are best suited for treatment in the Drama, Belasco, writing (February 9, 1909) to Mr. William Bullock, relative to the plays of the late J. M. Synge, made this significant statement: "I think that *domestic life* offers more possibilities to the playwright than any other theme."

Those possibilities (as he understands them), which he has utilized in several plays, are specially exemplified in "The Charity Ball,"—so named because its purpose is to inculcate the virtue of taking a charitable view of human infirmity, and also because one important scene of it occurs at a ball given for charity, in the New York Metropolitan Opera House. It rightfully ranks among the best existent dramas of its didactic and benevolent class.

The principal characters in "The Charity Ball" are the *Rev. John van Buren*, his brother, *Dick van Buren*, *Ann Cruger*, and *Phyllis Lee*. The *Rev.*



*John* is Rector of a fashionable church, in New York, while *Dick* is a Wall Street stock gambler, a person of exceptional ability, naturally amiable, but weak in character, self-indulgent, and wild; he is harassed by business cares and is breaking under the strain of his speculative pursuits. *Dick* has seduced *Phyllis Lee*, an orphan, and, though he is represented as being truly fond of her, has discarded her, with the purpose of marrying *Ann Cruger*, who is an heiress. *Ann Cruger*, secretly, is enamoured of the *Rev. John*. The *Rector* befriends *Phyllis*, not, however, being aware of her misfortune and miserable plight as the victim of his brother's duplicity, and the parson soon succumbs to her charms, fancies himself in love with her, and becomes a wooer. His method of courtship is indirect. Being inscrutably,—and impossibly,—blind to the amorous attachment of *Ann Cruger*, he seeks the aid of that lady to win for him the love of *Phyllis*. Then occurs the gay scene of the Charity Ball, in the course of which a painful interview happens between *Phyllis* and *Dick van Buren*, supplemented by *Phyllis's* revelation to *Ann Cruger* of her relation to *Dick*, his admission to *Ann* of his misconduct, and her offer to *Phyllis* of an asylum in her own home.

The wretched *Phyllis*, immediately after the ball,



distracted by her sense of shame and degradation, speeds through night and storm to her benefactor, the compassionate clergyman, finds him in his study, and, appealing to him as a Christian minister, tells him her sad story and supplicates for any word of comfort. The arrival of *Ann Cruger*, who has followed her, prevents the disclosure of her seducer's name. The clergyman, however, surmises the truth, and when his brother *Dick* returns home denounces his iniquity, implores him to make the only possible reparation, and finally induces that selfish sinner,—whose conduct has been that of a blackguard, soften it how you may,—to wed the girl whom he has wronged. A midnight marriage then ensues, the *Rev. John* uniting in holy matrimony his dissolute brother and the woman whom, in his blindness, he has himself wished to wed. This scene is crowded with interest, incident, character, feeling, suspense, and dramatic effect. Later, *Dick van Buren* has died, the *Rector* has discovered that he loves *Ann Cruger* and that she loves him (and not another, as for a time he feared), and general felicity prevails.

The surge of deep feeling in this play is sometimes effectively commingled with playful levity: its pivotal scene contains a strong, vital, emotional appeal. Under Belasco's expert direction it was



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richly set on the Lyceum stage and it was acted with exceptional felicity and force. Nelson Wheatcroft played the libertine, *Dick van Buren*, in a way to make him credible and somewhat to redeem the cruel turpitude of his conduct. Herbert Kelcey was duly grave, gentle, manly, and eloquent as the *Rector*. Effie Shannon, as *Bess*, the clergyman's sister, with her sweet face and agile figure, enlivened the representation by her effervescence of girlish frolic. Grace Henderson,—much commended as the *Effie Deans* of this play,—gave an admirable personation of weak, bewitching womanhood. The persistent choice of a singularly beautiful and engaging woman for assumption of persons to be abandoned was again mysteriously exemplified in the casting of this actress for *Phyllis*. "The Charity Ball" was first produced at the Lyceum, before a representative and cordial audience, on November 19, 1888, and it had 200 consecutive performances there. As originally produced the play was thus cast:

<i>Rev. John van Buren</i> .....	Herbert Kelcey.
<i>Dick van Buren</i> .....	Nelson Wheatcroft.
<i>Judge Peter</i> .....	William J. LeMoyne.
<i>Franklin Cruger</i> .....	Charles Walcot.
<i>Mr. Creighton</i> .....	Harry Allen.
<i>Alec Robinson</i> .....	Fritz Williams.



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<i>Mr. Betts</i> .....	R. J. Dustan.
<i>Paxton</i> .....	Walter Clark Bellows.
<i>Cain</i> .....	Ada Terry Madison.
<i>Jasper</i> .....	Percy West.
<i>Ann Cruger</i> .....	Georgia Cayvan.
<i>Phyllis Lee</i> .....	Grace Henderson.
<i>Bess van Buren</i> .....	Effie Shannon.
<i>Mrs. Camilla de Peyster</i> .....	Mrs. Charles Walcott.
<i>Mrs. van Buren</i> .....	Mrs. Thomas Whiffen.
<i>Sophie</i> .....	Millie Dowling.

### MRS. LESLIE CARTER.

Belasco's association with Mrs. Leslie Carter began in 1889 and continued till 1906. In some ways it proved advantageous, but considerably more so to her than to him. The maiden name of that singularly eccentric woman,—a compound of many opposed qualities, sense and folly, sensibility and hardness, intelligence and dulness, an affectionate disposition and an imperious temper,—was Caroline Louise Dudley. She is, I understood from herself, of Scotch descent. She was born in Louisville, Kentucky, June 10, 186(4?). In youth she was deemed remarkable for something bizarre and alluring in her appearance, one special feature of which was her copious, resplendent hair, of the color that is called Titian red. When very young she became the wife (May 26, 1880) of Mr. Leslie



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Carter, of Chicago. The marriage proved unhappy, and in 1889 her husband obtained a divorce from her in that city. Comment on this case of domestic infelicity is not essential here. Mr. Carter was legally adjudged to be in the right and Mrs. Carter to be in the wrong. Society, knowing them both, sided with him and was bitterly condemnatory of her. She had few friends and very slight pecuniary resources. She was confronted with the necessity of earning a living, and she determined to adopt the vocation of the Stage. She had participated in private theatricals, as so many other young women in kindred circumstances have done before emerging in the Theatre, but she possessed no training for it. She had heard of Belasco's repute as an histrionic instructor, and proceeding with better (or perhaps only more fortunate) judgment than she had ever before or has ever since displayed, she sought an introduction to him for the purpose of obtaining his assistance as a teacher. That introduction she procured through Edward G. Gillmore (18—1905), then manager of the New York Academy of Music, and to Belasco she made known her position and her aspirations. How crude those aspirations were, and how indefinite her plans as to a stage career, can be conjectured from her response to the first inquiry he made,—whether



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she wished to act in tragedy or comedy. "I am a horsewoman," she replied, "and I wish to make my first entrance on a horse, leaping over a hurdle." No practical result attended that interview. Belasco, of course, observed the peculiarities of the impracticable novice and, perhaps, some glimmering indication of a talent in her which might be developed; but he was at that time preoccupied in collaboration with De Mille on "The Charity Ball," and Mrs. Carter's application was put aside and, by him, forgotten. She returned to Chicago, but she did not falter in her purpose. A little later, learning that Belasco had again secluded himself at Echo Lake (where, indeed, with De Mille, he had sought a secluded refuge in which to finish "The Charity Ball"), she again presented herself before him and besought him to become her teacher and to embark her on a dramatic career.

"Mrs. Carter came to me," he said, "while De Mille and I were at work on 'The Charity Ball.' I was almost worn out the afternoon she arrived—not having had any sleep to speak of in two days—and she was almost hysterical and frantic with fatigue, trouble, and anxiety. She told me much of the story of her domestic tragedy,—and a heart-breaking story it is,—and, as she told it and I



listened, I began to see the possibilities in her,—if *only* she could act, on the stage, with the same force and pathos she used in telling her story. I think a real manager and dramatist is, in a way, like a physician: a physician gets so that he never looks at a human face without noting whether it shows signs of disease or not: I never look at a face or listen to a voice without noting whether they show signs of fitness for the stage. Mrs. Carter showed it, in every word she spoke, in every move she made: if only she could *act* like that on the stage, I caught myself thinking. The upshot of the matter was that I promised to give her a trial, to see whether she could *act* as well as she could *talk*, and that, if she stood the test, I'd help her if I could. After I returned to New York I rehearsed her in several parts I had given her; I became convinced that she had the makings of a great actress in her, and I determined that, as soon as I could, I would take up her training and, if she proved as talented as I thought her, would try to strike out for myself and establish her as a star."



## EPISODE OF "THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER."

After having safely launched "The Charity Ball" Belasco turned to the task of making Mrs. Carter an actress. It seems almost incredible, but such was the existing animosity toward her that,—notwithstanding his theatrical connections and although he had performed many friendly services for persons of authority in the Theatre, and was, moreover, the stage manager and dramatist of the Lyceum,—Belasco was unable to secure the use of a stage on which to conduct her rehearsals. To hire one, at a high rental, might have been practicable, but neither he nor his pupil possessed money enough to pay the rent of a stage. From this dilemma an apparent means of exit presented itself. The beautiful and popular child actress, Elsie Leslie, who had played at the Lyceum in "Editha's Burglar" and also, with phenomenal success, in "Little Lord Fauntleroy," had suggested to Samuel L. Clemens, "Mark Twain," who was always friendly toward her, a dramatization of his story of "The Prince and the Pauper," in which she should appear, playing both *Tom Canty* and *Prince Edward of Wales*. The plan suggested by that clever child had been adopted; Mrs. Abby Sage Richardson had prepared an acting version of



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Twain's book, and it had been produced, December 24, 1889, at the Park Theatre, Philadelphia, under the management of Daniel Frohman. The venture was seen to be auspicious, but the play was found to be inchoate, and the performances, aside from that of the little star, were rough and unsatisfactory. Belasco's need of the use of a stage for rehearsals of Mrs. Carter was known to Daniel Frohman, who proposed to him that he should revise and reconstruct Mrs. Richardson's version of "The Prince and the Pauper," and also rehearse the company, so that a production might be safely attempted in New York, in return for which services he was promised the use of the stage of the Lyceum (when it was not required for the Lyceum stock company), as often as he desired, for rehearsals of Mrs. Carter. To that arrangement Belasco agreed. "I was getting only \$35 a week for my services at the Lyceum," he told me, "aside from royalties on my plays, and I knew the work on Mrs. Richardson's play and the rehearsals of the company would be heavy. But what could I do? I have often been beaten—but I never give in. I knew there was the real stuff in Mrs. Carter, but I simply had to have a stage; I could make no progress with her till I got one. So I accepted 'Dan's' offer." His





Photograph by Sarony.

Belasco's Collection.

**ELSIE LESLIE AS THE *PAUPER-PRINCE*, IN "THE PRINCE  
AND THE PAUPER"**







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expectation that the labor would prove onerous was amply justified. He finally beat the play into an acceptable shape, but his trials with the company were exasperating. Belasco, naturally amiable and ordinarily both diffident and shy, can be, and when fully roused often is, unpleasant on the stage. There came a time when he lost all patience with "The Prince and the Pauper" company, and, at a dress rehearsal, about three o'clock in the morning, called the company on the stage and, singly and collectively, "in good set terms" and with expletive sarcasm, gave assurance to everybody present that "except the little girl there is not one, no, *not one* of the lot of you that knows how to act—or anything else!" This comprehensive denunciation did not redound to his advantage or endear him to the management of the Lyceum. However, he finally got the company drilled into respectable shape and the play was successfully produced in New York, January 20, 1890, at the Broadway Theatre, where it ran till March 1.

### RETIREMENT FROM THE LYCEUM THEATRE.

Belasco, relieved of responsibility as to "The Prince and the Pauper," turned at once to the instruction of his pupil, Mrs. Carter, and for



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a short time rehearsed her on the Lyceum stage. He had, however, hardly begun the rehearsals, for the holding of which he had, in equity, given so much more than it was worth, when the bargain was, in a singularly disgraceful manner, repudiated,—Belasco receiving from the manager of the theatre the following terse communication:

*(Daniel Frohman to David Belasco.)*

"The Lyceum Theatre, New York,

"February 26, [1890]

"Dear David:—

"The Stockholders request me not to have Mrs. Carter rehearse on our stage any more.

"Yours,

"DAN'L FROHMAN."

Belasco's resentment was, naturally and properly, very bitter. He had been for some time conscious that he was effectively "cabined, cribbed, confined" at the Lyceum. He had also been for some time in negotiation with A. M. Palmer, looking to a presentation of the play which he had in mind as a starring vehicle for Mrs. Carter. He wrote immediately, in response to Mr. Frohman:



*(David Belasco to Daniel Frohman.)*

"New York, February 27, [1890]

"My dear D. F.:—

"Your note in reference to Mrs. Carter received. When Mr. Palmer was informed that the stockholders objected to Mrs. Carter's use of the Lyceum stage, he placed both his theatres at my disposal. Therefore, she will trouble their over-sensitive natures no more. As far as I myself am concerned, rest assured I shall not forget their petty treatment of me.

"Sincerely,

"DAVE."

It is probable that, without the sting of this contemptible conduct on the part of the stockholders of the Lyceum (instigated, as I understand, by complaints from Miss Georgia Cayvan), Belasco would, for some time longer, have continued to toil in his treadmill at that temple of liberal virtue. As the ultimate event has proved, it was fortunate that he was thus annoyed. He had resolved to retire before he had finished writing his acknowledgment of Mr. Frohman's note; he sent in his resignation soon afterward, and, on March 27, 1890, his association with the Lyceum was ended.



## A LONG, LONG ROAD.

One of my earliest and best friends, the loved and honored poet Longfellow, sometimes cited to me a maxim (which, alas, I have all my life neglected to heed!) that "he who carries his bricks to the building of every one's house will never build one for himself." When Belasco withdrew from the Lyceum Theatre (March 27, 1890) he had been for twenty years,—notwithstanding his efforts toward independence,—carrying bricks to build houses for other persons. He was conscious of this mistake and dissatisfied with himself for having made it, and he now resolutely determined to build for himself. During the five and one-half years, March, 1890, to October, 1895, he worked with persistent diligence, often in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties, to train and establish the woman of whose histrionic destiny he had assumed the direction and to achieve for himself position and power as a theatrical manager. He had in mind for his embryonic star, Mrs. Leslie Carter, a play which, ultimately, was written and successfully produced, under the name of "The Heart of Maryland"; but when first he seriously began the task of training that beginner for the stage even the plan of that play was rudimentary, and it became imperative that he should at once secure



a practical vehicle for her use and should get her launched as an actress. There could be no question of her beginning in a minor capacity in some obscure company and working her way up: she had no thought of enduring any such novitiate, though she was willing, in fact eager, to perform any amount of arduous labor. But, with her, it was a case of beginning at the top—or not at all. In general, that is a mistaken plan; it results in utter failure a hundred times for once that it succeeds; yet, sometimes, where backed by genuine ability and indomitable courage, the course that seems rash proves really the most judicious, and for those with the heart to endure to lose it proves the way to win. The famous soldier Montrose wrote truly:

“He either fears his fate too much  
Or his deserts are small,  
That puts it not unto the touch  
To win or lose it all.”

To that touch Belasco and Mrs. Carter determined to put her fate at the earliest possible moment, yet not altogether without preparation for the ordeal through which she was to pass. Belasco's method of instructing her was the only practical one: he treated her as if she had been the leading woman in a stock company, under his direction, in circum-



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stances which made it peremptory that she, and only she, should act certain parts, and with whom, accordingly, he must do the best he could. His experience as a teacher was onerous and often discouraging, but he and his pupil persevered. "Mrs. Carter," he writes, "had no idea of the rudiments of acting. In Chicago she had been a brilliant drawing-room figure. Very graceful in private life, she became awkward and self-conscious on the stage. Our first lessons included a series of physical exercises, to secure a certain grace and ease of motion." During the period from April, 1890, to about June, 1891, according to Belasco's statement to me, Mrs. Carter, under his direction, memorized and rehearsed (sometimes on the stage of Palmer's Theatre, sometimes in private rooms) more than thirty different parts, in representative drama, ranging from *Nancy Sikes*, in "Oliver Twist," to *Parthenia*, in "Ingomar"; from *Camille* to *Lady Macbeth*; from *Julia*, in "The Hunchback," to *Mrs. Bouncer*, in "Box and Cox," and from *Leah the Forsaken* to *Frou-Frou*. Meantime, however, Belasco had a wife and children to support, as well as himself; his resources were little and day by day were growing less; Mrs. Carter and her devoted mother were no better off, and it was essential that the hopeful but harassed adventurer should add to his income, derived from miscellaneous



private teaching and coaching for the stage, to which precarious expedient he was, at this period, compelled to revert, to eke out his slender revenue. At this juncture his friend Charles Frohman, who had bought Bronson Howard's war melodrama of "Shenandoah" and had prospered with it, and who had undertaken to provide dramatic entertainments for Proctor's Twenty-third Street Theatre, applied to him for a new play.

#### CONFEDERATION WITH CHARLES FROHMAN.

"There was an old building on Twenty-third Street. Proctor now [1890] turned this building into a theatre, and 'C. F.' asked me to write a play *for the opening*. . . . Frohman," writes Belasco, "had persuaded F. F. Proctor to turn an old church . . . into a theatre. 'C. F.' was to supply the company and a new play. Proctor, a pioneer with a tremendous amount of ambition, had been making money in vaudeville and wanted to enter the theatrical field. 'Dave,' 'C. F.' said, 'I shall depend upon you for the play.' . . . I advised him not to wait an instant, lest Proctor's enthusiasm die out. *The following week* the old church began dropping its ecclesiastical aspect as fast as the wreckers could do away with it.

"I was strongly tempted to write the opening play alone, but when I saw how much depended upon it I had a touch of stage fright. Naturally, my thoughts turned to Henry De Mille. . . . We had always been successful because our way of thought was similar and we were frank in our criti-



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cism of each other's work. He excelled in narrative and had a quick wit. The emotional or dramatic scenes were more to my liking. I acted while he took down my speeches. When a play was finished, it was impossible to say where his work left off and my work began [???—W. W.]. This is what collaboration should be.

"It was five o'clock in the morning when I was seized with the idea of asking De Mille to assist me and I hastened at once to his house. I knocked on his door with the vigor of a watchman sounding a fire alarm, and when De Mille at last appeared he was armed with a cane, ready to defend his hearth and home. I told him of the necessity for a play for 'C. F.'s' opening and he agreed to work with me. In the profession De Mille and I were thought to be very lucky as 'theatre openers.' Looking back, I see how many, many times it has been my fate to break the bottle over the prows of theatrical ships. Here we were again,—De Mille and I,—talking over the birth and baptism of yet another New York manager!"

### PROCTOR'S TWENTY-THIRD STREET THEATRE.

This recollection is not accurate relative to details concerning the opening of Proctor's Twenty-third Street Theatre. The site of that theatre was, at one time, occupied by a church. Later it was occupied by an armory for the Seventy-ninth Regiment, N. G. S. N. Y. Then it was converted into "Salmi Morse's Temple Theatre," but Morse was denied a license and could not open it. Under management





From an old photograph.

Belasco's Collection.

**HENRY C. DE MILLE**







of Converse L. Graves, who took over Morse's interest, it was opened, May 21, 1883, as the Temple Theatre, with a play called "A Bustle Among the Petticoats." Max Strakosch succeeded Graves as manager of the house, and in turn sold his interest to Albert G. Eaves, a New York theatrical costumer, who, in association with Edward Stone, conducted the theatre for a short time. Thereafter, about 1885, it was restored to ecclesiastical service as the Twenty-third Street Tabernacle. F. F. Proctor leased the property in 1888, tore down the old building and erected a new one, which, as Proctor's Twenty-third Street Theatre, was opened, May 5, 1889, with a performance, by Neil Burgess and his company, of "The County Fair." Dockstader's Minstrels succeeded Burgess, and on August 31 "The Great Metropolis" was there first acted. "Shenandoah," transferred from the Star Theatre, where it was produced for the first time in New York on September 9, 1889, was presented there on October 21, that year, and it ran till April 19, 1890,—receiving, in all, 250 performances. Stuart Robson played there, in "The Henrietta," from April 21 to May 31, when the theatre was closed. It was reopened on September 8, 1890, with a farce by William Gillette, called "All the Comforts of Home,"—adapted from "Ein Toller Einfall,"—which held the stage



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till October 18, and, on October 21, for the first time anywhere, "Men and Women" was there produced. That event occurred *a year and a half after* the theatre was first opened. Descanting on the inception of the play of "Men and Women," Belasco writes:

"About this time the newspapers were full of a bank scandal. A young man employed in a bank had speculated with funds and found himself in a very dangerous position. His father, a fine man of business, and a stockholder, had the sympathy of the entire public in his misfortune. Owing to the young man's speculations, the bank was on the verge of closing, and the newspapers were full of harrowing details. As I read the accounts I came to this sentence in a statement made by the father: 'I'll save the bank if it costs me a million a day!' 'Henry,' I said, 'there's our play. We must deal with a father's pride and love for his only son, no matter what deed the son may commit.' To me the father's statement meant: 'I'll save my boy, though I am left without a penny and have to beg on the streets.' . . .

"Next to inventing a plot and story, our greatest difficulty was to find a title. Our play was to have a universal appeal. One of our characters was a liberal *Jew*. Because of the broadness of the theme, we selected the name of 'Men and Women.' It was an accepted rule at this time to have two sets of lovers, but we broke all traditions by introducing three sets of heroes and heroines in 'Men and Women,' for we attempted to depict the frailties and weaknesses of many men and women. The Third Act represented a directors' meeting on the night before the



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closing of the bank, with a number of Federal government officials present. In order to be accurate it was necessary to get information from some one who had been through this scene in real life. I went to a bank cashier whom I knew, and explained our dilemma. 'I'll give you all the details of such a night,' he agreed, 'but you must be very careful. You understand that I must compromise no one, or my own position will be in jeopardy.' Then he gave me much information, describing the feelings of the financiers who walked under the shadow of arrest. When I left him I had all the facts necessary to create a rousing climax. I felt like a reporter who has gone after the news of an event and come away with a photograph of each moment of a tragedy."

### THE PLAY OF "MEN AND WOMEN."

This play would have been called by Boucicault a "comedy-drama": he was fond of classifying plays and he invented that designation (as well as various others) meaning thereby to denote a "sensation drama," illustrated with comedy. The pervasive defect of the play, like that which mars some other plays written by Belasco, in association with De Mille, is an excess of extraneous details. Nevertheless it tells an interesting story, well devised to absorb attention, and it possesses vital dramatic movement. The comedy element in it is trivial. The story, though somewhat confused, is stronger



than that in any other of the several plays written by Belasco and De Mille.

The main theme is the desperate situation of a man named *William Prescott*, cashier of a bank, who is guilty of peculation and who is striving to escape the consequences of his crime. An accomplice in the robbery is a broker, who has committed suicide. The assistant cashier of the bank, *Edwin Seabury* by name, *Prescott's* close friend and the betrothed lover of his sister, is suspected of the theft. At first, perceiving that for his personal security he need only remain silent and permit his innocent comrade to be ruined, *Prescott*, though drawn as a man essentially virtuous, yields to the temptation to hold his peace and let *Seabury* be condemned; but on discovering that his sweetheart, *Agnes Rodman*, is aware of his guilt and, out of devotion to him, is willing to condone his crime and his additional iniquity, *Prescott* is shocked into remorse and repentance and he determines that *Seabury* shall be saved, at whatever sacrifice of himself. The portrayal of the strife in the minds of *Prescott* and of *Agnes Rodman* is remarkably expert, vivid, and effective, the element of suspense being most adroitly sustained.

*Seabury's* peril is heightened by the implacable enmity of the attorney for the bank, *Calvin Sted-*



*man*, who is *Seabury's* unsuccessful rival in love, and who, honestly believing the young man guilty, exults in the opportunity to ruin him, and opposes every effort made by the president of the bank, *Israel Cohen*, to weather the storm and save the institution from ruin. The vital scene of the play occurs in the Third Act, when, late at night, in the library of the president's home, the directors of the bank assemble to consult with a National Bank Examiner and seek to contrive means to avert publicity, forestall a destructive "run," and restore the stolen funds. One of those directors, *Stephen Rodman*, father of the girl to whom *Prescott* is betrothed, opposes the purpose of *Stedman* to force public avowal of the situation, regardless of consequences to the institution, and is suddenly denounced by *Stedman* as being himself a former speculator whom he, *Stedman*, years earlier, has prosecuted, who was convicted, and has served a term in prison, and therefore should be deemed an unfit person to suggest such a composition of the trouble. The incidents and the language used in depicting that meeting of the directors of the tottering bank are skilfully and impressively used, and Belasco's extraordinary facility of dramatic expression, once his desired situation has been obtained, is finely exemplified. At the last, *Prescott* assuming



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his responsibility, the way out of the dilemma is provided by *Mr. Pendleton*, one of the directors, a half-deaf, crusty, apparently fussy, muddled old man, who is, in fact, clear-headed and practical and who provides the necessary money to save the bank. Condonement of a felony is a dubious expedient, but in a fiction it is often convenient, especially when, as in "Men and Women," justice is seen to be done, all round.

One singular "effect" in the central scene of this play was caused by a glimmer of simulated moonlight through a stained glass window, showing a representation of the Christ (rather a surprising object of art to occur in the private library of a Jew, however liberal), after a fervid expression, by *Israel Cohen*, of the need of charity and forbearance. The wise counsel of the old Oxford Professor (cited and approved by Belasco's mentor, Boucicault, and sometimes attributed to him), that when you particularly admire any special passage in anything you have written you had better cut it out, might well have been mentioned by Belasco for the benefit of his collaborator. There are several passages of "fine writing" in "Men and Women," which show De Mille to disadvantage. The play will not bear close analysis: it was artificially constructed around the situation at the crisis of the



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bank's affairs; but it admirably answered the purpose for which it was written, and it had 203 consecutive performances, at the Twenty-third Street Theatre. This was the cast:

<i>Israel Cohen</i> .....	Frederic de Belleville.
<i>William Prescott</i> .....	William Morris.
<i>Edwin Seabury</i> .....	Orrin Johnson.
<i>Mr. Pendleton</i> .....	Charles Leslie Allen.
<i>Mr. Reynolds</i> .....	W. H. Tilliard.
<i>Mr. Bergman</i> .....	Arthur Hayden.
<i>Mr. Wayne</i> .....	Edgar Mackey.
<i>Calvin Stedman</i> .....	R. A. Roberts.
<i>Lyman H. Webb</i> .....	Henry Talbot.
<i>Stephen Rodman</i> .....	Frank Mordaunt.
<i>Col. Zachary T. Kip</i> .....	M. A. Kennedy.
<i>Dr. "Dick" Armstrong</i> .....	T. C. Valentine.
<i>Sam Delafield</i> .....	J. C. Buckstone.
<i>Arnold Kirke</i> .....	Emmett Corrigan.
<i>Crawford</i> .....	E. J. McCullough.
<i>District Messenger No. 81</i> .....	Master Louis Haines.
<i>Roberts</i> .....	A. R. Newtown.
<i>John</i> .....	Richard Marlow.
<i>Agnes Rodman</i> .....	Sydney Armstrong.
<i>Dora</i> .....	Maude Adams.
<i>Mrs. Kate Delafield</i> .....	Odette Tyler.
<i>Margery Knox</i> .....	Etta Hawkins.
<i>Mrs. Jane Preston</i> .....	Annie Adams.
<i>Mrs. Kirke</i> .....	Lillian Chantore.
<i>Lucy</i> .....	Winona Shannon.
<i>Julia</i> .....	Gladys Eurelle.



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The stage setting of "Men and Women" was uncommonly fine and much of the acting was excellent,—notably the performances of *Israel Cohen* by Frederic de Belleville, *William Prescott* by William Morris, *Calvin Stedman* by R. A. Roberts, *Stephen Rodman* by Frank Mordaunt, and *Mr. Pendleton* by Charles Leslie Allen. Roberts was specially admirable for the manner with which he suffused his impersonation of the savagely implacable attorney with an antipathetic but wholly veritable air of saturated self-approbation in his cruel assumption of righteousness.

The whole moral doctrine of Belasco, not only in this play but in several others of the same class,—a doctrine upon which he dwells with what, considering the existing way of the world, seems rather a superfluous insistence,—is comprised in four well-known lines by Robert Burns which, on the programme, were used as an epigraph for this play:

"Then gently scan your brother man,  
Still gentler sister woman,  
Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang,  
To step aside is human."

It is. But many things that are human are reprehensible. "To step aside" sometimes causes sins that can never be expiated, sorrows that can never



be assuaged, wrongs that never can be righted. The most terrible of all words is the word CONSEQUENCES.

HATCHING "THE UGLY DUCKLING."

Belasco, while collaborating with De Mille in the writing of "Men and Women" and subsequently while rehearsing, for Frohman, the company which acted in that play, concurrently continued his tuition of Mrs. Carter; but it was beyond even his aspiring spirit and indefatigable industry to undertake at the same time the additional task of writing a new play for her use. In this dilemma he presently effected an arrangement with Mr. Paul M. Potter whereby that playwright agreed to furnish him with "a comedy drama" for Mrs. Carter's use, so that he was left free to work at his other tasks and to seek for capital with which to launch his star. His next step was to arrange with Edward D. Price, a person widely experienced in theatrical affairs, to act as business manager of Mrs. Carter's tour, Price accepting the office on condition that Belasco would provide a capital of \$10,000, to be placed on deposit in a bank before beginning the season. This Belasco undertook to do,—not at that moment knowing how he was to do it, but feeling confident, nevertheless, that it could be done. On conferring with Mrs.



Carter and her mother he was apprised that the latter had contrived to obtain the sum of \$1,500. On learning that this would be wholly inadequate for the production of the new play, Mrs. Carter suggested that application for assistance should be made, on her behalf, to wealthy friends of hers, Mr. and Mrs. N. K. Fairbank, of Chicago, who had been kind to her throughout the distressing ordeal of her domestic troubles and who evidently believed in her integrity and ability. This application was at once made, and it was successful. "We will deposit \$10,000 to your credit," said Mr. Fairbank (so Belasco has stated to me), "and it is to be used for launching Mrs. Carter as a star. If you need more, you can get it by applying to my legal representatives in Chicago." "The only restriction that Fairbank stipulated for," added Belasco, "was the very reasonable one that I should keep an account of the expenditures,—which I did, to the last penny."

Having secured a competent business manager and, apparently, sufficient financial support, it only remained to wait for the play and to improve Mrs. Carter as much as possible as an actress. Mr. Potter soon forwarded the manuscript of his play, which was called "The Ugly Duckling." On reading that fabrication Belasco,—who seems to have expected much from Mr. Potter,—was chagrined to find it



artificial, flimsy, and insufficient. Instead of at once undertaking to rewrite it himself he injudiciously employed for that purpose a person named Archibald C. Gordon, who was commended to his favor as being qualified to perform the required work. This Gordon, however, turned out to be not only a blackguard who could not be tolerated but also to be wholly incompetent as a playwright, and Belasco, in consequence, after much annoyance, was ultimately compelled himself to rectify, as far as possible, the gross inadequacies of the piece. Testifying on this subject, in court, in 1896, he said: "I cut out *everything* that Mr. Gordon wrote." Notwithstanding all impediments, delays and vexations, a company was at last engaged, a theatre was secured, rehearsals were effected, and, on November 10, 1890, Mrs. Carter, acting *Kate Graydon*, made her first appearance on the stage, at the Broadway Theatre, New York.

"THE UGLY DUCKLING."—MRS. CARTER'S DÉBUT.

The play of "The Ugly Duckling" is founded, in part, on the idea of Andersen's fairy tale, from which its name is taken,—the idea, namely, that the supposedly least promising and least esteemed member of a brood may prove to be the finest



and most worthy of admiration. The story relates to domestic tribulations in a prominent New York family, named *Graydon*. The youngest member of that family, *Kate Graydon*, returning home from England, finds her more valued sister, *Hester*, engaged to be married to an Englishman, *Viscount Huntington*, by whom she has herself been courted, in London. She keeps her secret for her sister's sake, and *Hester* becomes *Huntington's* wife. A vindictive Corsican, *Count Malatesta*, believing that in *Huntington* he has found the betrayer of his wife, the *Countess Malatesta*, entices *Hester* to his apartments, and then causes *Huntington* to be apprised of her presence there. *Kate*, having followed her sister, liberates her from this scandalous situation, at the cost of compromising herself.

The play will not bear consideration. That Mrs. Carter should not have been irrevocably damned as an actress by making her first appearance in such a puerile composition speaks much for her natural talent and for Belasco's skilful tuition and management. That he should have risked her advent in such a fabric of trash is astounding. Since, ultimately, he established her as a highly successful star, I suppose he would maintain that his judgment has been vindicated. I cannot but feel, how-





Photograph by Sarony.

Belasco's Collection.

**MRS. LESLIE CARTER**  
About the time of "The Ugly Duckling"







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ever, that, had he embarked her with a good play, he would have brought her to public acceptance much earlier than he did. In Mrs. Carter's performance of *Kate Graydon* there were moments in which she escaped the thralldom of solicitude and self-consciousness and clearly indicated possession of the faculty of vigorous dramatic expression. This was the original cast of "The Ugly Duckling":

<i>Douglas Oakley</i> .....	Arthur Dacre.
<i>Count Malatesta</i> .....	Edward J. Henley.
<i>Professor Graydon</i> .....	William H. Thompson.
<i>Viscount Huntington</i> .....	Ian [Forbes-] Robertson.
<i>Mr. Ernest Granly</i> .....	R. F. Cotton.
<i>Jack Farragut</i> .....	Raymond Holmes.
<i>Chevalier Raff</i> .....	Mervin Dallas.
<i>Randolph</i> .....	Thomas Oberle.
<i>Mrs. Graydon</i> .....	Ida Vernon.
<i>Hester Graydon</i> .....	Helen Bancroft.
<i>Kate Graydon</i> .....	Mrs. Leslie Carter.
<i>Mrs. Granly</i> .....	Helen Russell.
<i>Helen</i> .....	Ida Macdonald.
<i>Agnes</i> .....	Fannie Batchelder.

"If it had not been for the interest of Isaac Rich, of Boston," Belasco told me, "whose friendship and good will I had gained through my work on Gillette's dramatization of 'She,' and who was kind enough to help me when it seemed as though most of the rest of the world was against me, I don't



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believe we could have got a tour booked anywhere. However, we *did* manage to get a route—and lost a fair-sized fortune playing it! Mrs. Carter was made a target all along the line.”

### MORE FAILURE, AND A LAWSUIT.

During this tour, though Mrs. Carter revealed fine talent and won some commendation, the business was uniformly bad until she appeared in Chicago; there, for the first time, the receipts exceeded the expenses, and it began to seem as though the tide had turned toward prosperity. But the venture had already cost more than \$40,000, and Fairbank, becoming dissatisfied, suddenly withdrew his support. “On the strength of Mr. Fairbank’s promise,” Belasco declared, “I had given mine, to many creditors, and now, when they pressed for payment (as they did very quickly when it became known Fairbank had withdrawn), I was unable to keep it. I had no recourse but to bring suit against him to make good his promise and, most unwillingly, I prepared to do so.” Mrs. Carter’s first tour under Belasco’s direction and the life of “The Ugly Duckling” were both peremptorily brought to an end by Fairbank, acting through one of his attorneys, R. W. Morrison, in Kansas City, on March 14,



1891; the theatrical company which had been acting in association with Mrs. Carter was disbanded, and the perplexed manager and his dejected pupil returned to New York, where arrangements were presently made by Belasco to institute a lawsuit against Fairbank. Writing on this subject he has said:

"The Fairbank lawyers came to New York to see what compromise I would accept. I said: 'Here are all the bills. If you pay them, the incident will be closed.' But they refused. Mr. Fairbank had hoped the tour would be a financial success, the lawyers said, and he would never have entered into such a speculation if he had known how much it involved. 'Certainly,' I answered, 'he did not expect a theatrical venture of this nature to cost nothing! I am sure of Mrs. Carter's ultimate success,' I declared, 'and I am willing to bind myself by a promise to pay everything back'; but the lawyers refused. So I put my affairs in the hands of my friend, Judge Dittenhoefer, and the suit began. The trial lasted for three weeks."

Belasco's suit against Fairbank,—which was to recover \$65,000, as reimbursement of losses incurred in presenting "The Ugly Duckling," payment for professional services as Mrs. Carter's dramatic instructor (for which services Fairbank had agreed to pay), and other items,—remained in abeyance for several years. It was, however, finally brought to trial on June 3, 1896, before Justice Leonard Gie-



gerich and a jury, in Part V. of the Supreme Court of New York. Belasco's action was met by denial and a counter suit for \$53,000 by Fairbank. The issues were acrimoniously contested at every point, but on June 23 the jury returned a compromise verdict (as one jurymen described it) in favor of Belasco, awarding him \$16,000 and 5 per cent. interest,—\$20,000 in all. During that trial certain newspapers, manifesting singular partisan bias, went to scandalous extremes of exaggeration and ridicule in their reports of the testimony in effort to disparage Belasco and make him appear contemptible. One fiction then originated has persisted,—the fiction, namely, that Belasco instructed Mrs. Carter by "pounding and bumping" her and dragging her about a room by the hair. That tale was based on an allusion to rehearsal of the shocking Murder Scene in the revolting play of "Oliver Twist."

Mrs. Carter's acknowledgment of her debt to Belasco and her appreciation of his assistance and his forbearance toward her are significantly denoted in a letter written by her, June 3, 1890, to Charles L. Allen, one of Fairbank's principal Chicago lawyers, from which the following words are quoted:

"He [Belasco] feels he cannot go on with me unless he is able to make things creditable. He has stuck by me in



my struggle against prejudice; he has stood up for me, and given his personal written assurance on every contract I have that things will be creditably and properly done. It is owing to him and his personal influence among theatrical managers that I have succeeded in getting the best route and the best theatres—he has committed himself and will not have failure meet him.

“He has helped me without asking pay—he has given my play—his name—his instruction—he has given up other things—to put me through: he will produce my play—he will answer for my success—he stands sponsor for my first night, and before the entire public—and he does it all without asking pay—ready to wait until I am started for his remuneration—and *he did all this on Mr. Fairbank's promise to see me through. . . .*”

In his “Story” Belasco makes this kindly allusion to Fairbank, which indicates that the clash between them resulted from meddlesome interference of persons inimical to him and to his star:

“I never regretted anything more than being forced to bring suit against Fairbank. He was courteous, kind-hearted, mellow, and human. I am sure that when he and his wife started to aid Mrs. Carter it was their intention to see her through. I met him in after years, and in the course of conversation he admitted that all I had done for Mrs. Carter was done wisely. ‘It's too horrible,’ he said. ‘I was badly advised by my friends. You should never have been obliged to carry the matter into the courts.’”



## A POVERTY-STRICKEN STRUGGLE.

When Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Dudley, her mother, returned to New York after the demise of "The Ugly Duckling," in Kansas City (1891), they established their residence at No. 63 Clinton Place. Belasco lodged at No. 126 Waverley Place, and almost immediately he resumed his project of writing, unaided, a new play specially designed for the use of Mrs. Carter. Having no convenient place of his own in which to work, he obtained the use of a room in Mrs. Dudley's apartment, in which to write his play, and there he completed the first draft of "The Heart of Maryland," and incidentally continued his tuition of Mrs. Carter. I remember seeing them once at about that period at Delmonico's old restaurant, Twenty-sixth Street, where I chanced to be dining with Augustin Daly and Ada Rehan, and years afterward, on one of the few occasions when I have personally met Mrs. Carter, she mentioned remembering the same incident, saying it was so unusual for them, in those days of trouble, to visit that pleasant place. They were, she added, celebrating some little favorable turn in their prospects; "I looked at Mr. Daly and Miss Rehan," said Mrs. Carter, "and whispered to 'Mr. Dave,' 'Shall *we* ever "get there" and be, like



them, successful and accepted?" "To which, she said, Belasco confidently answered, "Of course we shall!"

Speaking to me lightly of that period of ordeal, which was, in fact, a bitterly afflicting one for him to endure, Belasco said: "But Delmonico's was not for us in those days: my family were, fortunately for them, in San Francisco, and many a time,—habitually, in fact,—Mrs. Carter and her mother and I 'dined' at a twenty-five cent *table d'hôte* on Fourth Avenue—and were lucky to dine anywhere. We had put all we had into launching and exploiting Mrs. Carter, and those two women were hard put to it to keep their Clinton Place apartment. As for me,—well, I had, of course, some income from my plays, and I gave private coaching to beginners and professionals, anybody who would employ me (among others, by the way, Georgia Cayvan, who always liked to have me rehearse her, even after I left the Lyceum), and I kept going, after a fashion; but I had expenses heavier than my resources would meet, and I was most of the time poorer than I like to remember—and all the time I was harassed with anxiety."

Writing of that same period, he gives this glimpse of a poverty-stricken struggle:

"It so happened that at this time the first of the 'beauty



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doctors' and the 'facial-massage' school were making fortunes with their lotions. It may be interesting to know that Mrs. Carter was sorely tempted to enter this field and bring out a preparation for the complexion. In fact, she negotiated with a well-known chemist, who advised her to carry out her idea. Lack of necessary capital prevented, however, and she kept to the stage instead of becoming a business woman. The world may have lost a very good 'skin-food,' but it gained a fine actress.

"When 'The Heart of Maryland' was finished models of the scenes were made and I found myself with a play and a star—but no financial manager. Every one to whom I read the manuscript was eager to accept it, but no one wanted Mrs. Carter, despite the success she had made. Every manager had a leading woman far, far better suited to the part of *Maryland*. I never heard of such wonderful leading women! The town was alive with them! 'Mrs. Carter is not a public favorite,' I was told on all sides. 'However, the play was written for her, and I've made up my mind not to take it away from her,' I answered. The Lord knows she had suffered enough while waiting for it."

Mrs. Carter, beyond demonstrating her possession of genuine though nascent histrionic ability, obviously had not made any "success,"—except in her approving preceptor's mind. Indeed, the disastrous fate of "The Ugly Duckling," impending legal contentions, and the general social oppugnancy to Mrs. Carter were strong, in fact seemingly insuperable, reasons for managerial hesitancy in making any venture vitally dependent upon her for its



success. Belasco, though he adhered to his resolve that only Mrs. Carter should act the part of *Maryland Calvert*, which he had devised for her, felt himself almost nonplussed. He was heavily in debt; he had no employment; he felt himself to be the object of active journalistic animosity; he possessed no financial resources; he seemed, in short, to be on the verge of defeat. Charles Frohman chanced to meet him at that time and, mentioning to him "a play with music" which had then recently been presented in Paris, made a suggestion that led to their first partnership in theatrical management. "The piece seems to have made a sensation," said Frohman: "the American rights are owned by Charles Wyndham. The leading characters are a Quaker father and his daughter. The daughter is *the* part. Can Mrs. Carter sing? Because, if she can and you want to produce it with me, I'll get an option from Wyndham: you and Mrs. Carter go to Paris and see the piece—and, if you think she can play the part and that it will be a go in this country, we'll do it together." Belasco, although somewhat doubtful whether Mrs. Carter could successfully sustain the requirements of a singing part, felt that the proffered opportunity must not be neglected; after discussing the point with his pupil a decision to essay the venture was quickly made, and, on April



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15, 1891, laying aside for the moment all other plans, Belasco, Mrs. Carter and her mother sailed for England on board the steamship *City of New York*, and from Southampton proceeded at once to France. "When we reached Paris," writes Belasco, "we found the *Bouffes Parisiennes* 'selling out' and 'Miss Helyett' the talk of the town. It was so full of possibilities that I cabled 'C. F.' to secure the rights before I saw the last act." That recommendation was promptly heeded by Frohman. Writing of an interview with Edmond Audran, author of the music, which occurred soon after he had seen the play, Belasco records:

"I asked him to give me a letter in praise of the singer who was to play the part, but without mentioning her name, for not only did we wish to create a surprise in America, but to avoid complications with Wyndham in London. I knew he would want us to engage a singer of established reputation, so I avoided mentioning the name of the artist who was to have the title-part. Wyndham was quite insistent when I met him in London, but I handed him Audran's letter, which proved to be the magic stroke. Before the day was over, all arrangements were made by cable."

### "MISS HELYETT" AND MRS. CARTER.

The production of the mongrel play with music, called in our Theatre "*Miss Helyett*,"—a fabric



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which commingles comic opera with the farrago known as "farce-comedy,"—was a minor incident in Belasco's struggle for advancement. Audran's music, though not in his best vein, is generally tuneful, gay, and spirited. The text was "rewritten from the French of Maxime Boucheron by David Belasco," and the play was first produced in America, November 3, 1891, at the Star Theatre, New York, Mrs. Carter then making her only appearance in a musical composition, and that being also Belasco's only association with comic opera, after he left the Theatre of San Francisco. The scene is laid at the Hotel del Norte, in the Spanish Pyrenees Mountains. The story, which is indelicate, relates to a ludicrous accident to a young Quakeress, of demure appearance and frolicsome disposition, whose hypocritical father is conducting her through Europe in search of an advantageous marriage. This female, known as *Miss Helyett*, falls over a precipice and is caught, buttock-end uppermost, in a convenient tree, from which predicament she is rescued by a strolling painter. She manages to conceal her face from her deliverer, and she parts from him without ascertaining his identity or disclosing her own. Later she determines to discover and to marry the man who is already so familiarly acquainted with her "secret symmetry" (as Byron calls it), and that pur-



pose she ultimately accomplishes. Her search for the unknown and her discovery and conquest of him constitute the substance of this operatic farce.

Mrs. Carter's personation of *Miss Helyett*, while not deficient of piquancy, was insignificant. As a singer she was in no way unusual. Belasco relates that, while in Paris with her, to see the French original, he requested Audran to hear Mrs. Carter sing and, if he thought well of her as a singer, to teach her the songs in "*Miss Helyett*." "Audran was charmed with her ability," he says, "and gave her a number of rehearsals. Then he recommended an instructor and even wrote an extra musical number for her,"—which indicates that Audran, as a musician, was easily pleased. His operetta was highly successful in Paris, and hardly less so in London, where Charles Wyndham brought it out, at the Criterion Theatre, under the name of "*Miss Decima*." It was generally, and justly, though without rancor, condemned by the press of New York. Nevertheless it had a considerable though not very remunerative career in the metropolis: it was acted at the Star Theatre till January 10, 1892, and on January 11 was transferred to the Standard Theatre, where it maintained itself till February 18,—the 100th performance occurring there on January



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29. Belasco seems to have set some store by it at one time, but that was long ago. Wyndham's London presentation of the composition was made July 23, 1891. This was the original cast of "Miss Helyett" in New York:

<i>Paul Grahame</i> .....	Mark Smith (Jr.).
<i>Todder Bunnythorne</i> .....	M. A. Kennedy.
<i>Obadiah Smithson</i> .....	Harry Harwood.
<i>Terence O'Shaughnessy</i> .....	G. W. Travener.
<i>Jacques Baccarel</i> .....	J. W. Herbert.
<i>Max Culmbacher</i> .....	N. S. Burnham.
<i>MacGilly</i> .....	Edgar Ely.
<i>Prof. Bonnefoy</i> .....	Gilbert Sarony.
<i>Señora Carmen Ricomba della Torquemada</i> ....	Kate Davis.
<i>Marmela</i> .....	Laura Clement.
<i>Mrs. Max Culmbacher</i> .....	Adelaide Emerson.
<i>Mrs. MacGilly</i> .....	Lillian Elma.
<i>La Stella</i> .....	Henrietta Rich.
<i>Miss Helyett (Smithson)</i> .....	Mrs. Leslie Carter.

After its New York engagement "Miss Helyett" was taken on a tour of principal cities of the country and was performed until the close of the theatrical season of 1891-'92. Notwithstanding its intrinsic paltriness and vulgarity, that play was practically useful to Belasco and Mrs. Carter, providing a temporary source of subsistence for both of them; yielding the actress some useful experience of the stage; permitting the dramatist some leisure for



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meditation and for rectification of his then immatured Civil War play, and leading, indirectly, to the writing and production of one of the best dramas with which his name is associated.

### ORIGIN OF THE EMPIRE THEATRE.

About March-May, 1892, James M. Hill, who had been managing the Union Square Theatre since September 7, 1885, being in financial difficulties,—which soon caused his failure,—found it expedient to dispose of his interest in that theatre, which he sold to his brother, Richard Hill, who directed it for a short time, beginning June 6, 1892, after which it was hired by A. Y. Pearson and Henry Greenwall. During several months preceding Hill's failure a lease of the Union Square could have been obtained, and that fact was generally known in the theatrical community. William Harris (1845-1916), desiring to obtain a theatre in New York, and knowing that Charles Frohman cherished a like ambition, proposed to the latter that they should coöperate and lease one. Frohman agreed to this, specifying that the Union Square was available. Harris immediately undertook to confer with the persons then in control of that house, but, casually meeting Mr. Al. Hayman, he mentioned the





Photograph by Sarony.

Belasco's Collection.

MRS. LESLIE CARTER AS MISS *HELYETT*







project to that person. In a concoction of records, errors, and idle praise which has been put forth as a "Life" of Charles Frohman the following account is printed of the conversation which ensued between them:

"'That's foolish,' said Hayman; 'Everything theatrical is going uptown.'

"'Well,' answered Harris, '“C. F.” wants a theatre, and I am determined that he shall have it, so I am going over to get the Union Square.'

"'If you and Frohman want a theatre that badly, I will build one for you,' he responded.

"'Where?' asked Harris.

"'I've got some lots at Fortieth and Broadway, and it's a good site, even if it is away up-town.'

"'They went back to Frohman's office, and here was hatched the plan for the Empire Theatre.'"

This theatre was built as an investment by Al. Hayman, William Harris, and Frank Sanger. The corner-stone was laid in May, 1892, and the house, leased by Charles Frohman and Messrs. Rich & Harris, was opened under the direction of Frohman eight months later. That enterprising speculator in public amusement, who had long been eager to establish himself in the metropolis, in a fine theatre under his direct control, keenly appreciated Belasco's abilities, and at the time when the new house was projected was associated with him in the



presentment of Mrs. Carter in "Miss Helyett." Frohman's main interest, however, was centred in the Empire, and, though aware that Belasco was preoccupied with work on "The Heart of Maryland," he urgently requested him to write a new play with which to open that theatre. At first Belasco demurred to the undertaking, deeming it essential to restrict himself to the work he had already begun, and to devote all his strength to the establishment of Mrs. Carter. That actress, however, hearing of Frohman's proposal and appreciating the possible advantage that might accrue to Belasco from his acceptance of it, insisted that he should provide the play for the opening of the Empire, even at the sacrifice of an early appearance for herself. The upshot of the negotiation was Belasco's agreement to write the desired play, in collaboration with his friend Franklyn Fyles (1847-1911),—then dramatic reviewer for "The New York Sun." "All through the storm of malicious lies that Mrs. Carter and I had to weather," said Belasco, "Fyles had been sympathetic and kind to us; writing under the pen-name of 'Clara Belle,' he had given Mrs. Carter many a lift and helped us a lot. I was grateful and I wanted to help him, if I could; and he was an experienced, good writer, and I was glad to have him to help me, for I wanted



'Charlie's' venture to succeed, and I felt the responsibility."

"THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME."

The result of that collaboration was the widely known and admired drama of "The Girl I Left Behind Me,"—the title of which was suggested by Daniel Frohman. "We had much difficulty in choosing a title for this play," writes Belasco; "in fact, we had none as we neared the last rehearsals. A Fourth of July celebration occurs in the First Act, during which a band plays 'The Girl I Left Behind Me.' Daniel Frohman was in front, at one of the rehearsals, and sent me a slip of paper on which was written 'The Girl I Left Behind Me,' and that was how our play was named." Few persons, I believe, hear even the name of that stirring air without a thrill: the associations with it that rise in any sensitive mind,—the agony of solicitude, doubt, hope, grief, and joy,—are irresistibly affecting; it singularly arouses apprehension and exultation, and its association with this play is specially appropriate because of its relevancy to the desperate military enterprise which creates the splendid climax of the drama.

"After I had agreed to write the opening play for Frohman," Belasco has told me, "I said nothing of



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my subject, because I had made up my mind to try to bring on the American Stage a phase of American life, on our Western frontiers, involving the American Indian, in a new way; I didn't want discussion and I dreaded discouragement." That, surely, was discreet, because it is immeasurably wiser, where works of art are concerned, to execute them rather than to talk about them. Belasco's interest in the Indian and Indian affairs began in his childhood: one of his stepping-stones into the Theatre was his performance of an *Indian Chief*, in Hager's "The Great Republic": and his determination to undertake depiction, at once dramatic and veritable, of an aspect of actual yet romantic life on our frontiers displayed sound artistic taste in selection of a theme and shrewd judgment in opening a fresh field, thitherto practically untouched.

At that time, early in 1892, the Indian troubles in the West were much in the public mind. The fierce insurrections of 1876, under the leadership of Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Spotted Tail, and others, and the lamentable slaughter of the gallant Custer and his intrepid followers in the terrible battle at the Little Bighorn (June 25, that year), had not been forgotten. Indeed, they could not be: the rising under Sitting Bull, in 1890, after his return



from Canada; the death of that wily old Medicine Man, who was shot, December 15, that year, with 300 braves, when he sought to escape, during the fight at Wounded Knee; the resistance to disarmament and the frightful massacre at the Pine Ridge Agency, two weeks later; the vigilant and finally successful movements of United States troops under General Nelson A. Miles, against the Indians, especially the Sioux, incident to the "Ghost Dance" furor, which was inspired by Sitting Bull and which extended through 1890-'91; and the massacre at the Rosebud Agency,—all those events made the subject unusually prominent in the public mind. Belasco and Fyles labored zealously at their task and it was duly completed; Frohman enthusiastically expressed himself satisfied; and, on January 25, 1898, the Empire Theatre (thereafter, till the day of his death, that manager's headquarters) was auspiciously dedicated with a performance of one of the most deservedly popular plays ever produced under his management: it had been acted for a week, beginning January 16, at the New National Theatre, Washington, D. C., in preparation for the New York presentment.



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### EXCELLENCE OF THAT INDIAN DRAMA.

The play of "The Girl I Left Behind Me" is among the best with which Belasco has been concerned and likewise one of the best that have been contributed to American dramatic literature. Its superiority to all the problematic, polemic, didactic, sociologic disquisitions, pretending to be plays, which have, of late years, so cluttered our Stage, is very great. The story is clear, direct, animated, sympathetic, and thrilling. The persons introduced are various, natural, interesting, discriminated, and finely drawn. The greater part of the dialogue is terse and characteristic. The scene is laid in the country of the Blackfoot Sioux, in Montana, chiefly at a remote and lonely outlying United States Army Post; otherwise at Fort Assiniboine. The chief characters are *Scar-Brow*, an Indian Chief, who has been educated in civilization and bears the name of *John Ledru*, but whom education has only made more bitter and revengeful, and who has rejoined his malignant tribe; *General Kennion*, a veteran of the United States Army, in command of the district in which he is stationed; *Lieutenant Edgar Hawksworth*, *Lieutenant Morton Parlow*, and *Kate Kennion*, the *General's* daughter. *Hawksworth* is a gentleman and a gallant soldier. *Parlow*



is a specious rascal, as yet undetected. *Kate Kennion*, though she loves *Hawksworth*, has promised to marry *Parlow*,—this being an inscrutable incongruity of the plot. *Parlow* has, much earlier, seduced and abandoned the wife of a brother officer, *Major Burleigh* by name,—under whose command he is now enrolled,—but who has long vainly sought to ascertain the identity of his wronger.

The situation, at the opening of the play, is one of unrest, discontent, and impending danger. The Indians, commanded by *Scar-Brow*, are sullen, hostile, and on the verge of revolt, and they are about to participate in one of their religious ceremonials called “The Sun Dance,”—of which purpose the military authorities in Montana disapprove. A vague sense of coming calamity broods over all the region and whispers of peril are borne on every breeze. A formal conference is held, between *General Kennion* and his officers and *Scar-Brow* and his savage warriors, at which the *General* commands that the “Sun Dance” shall not take place, and from which the Indian *Chieftain* then angrily and defiantly withdraws. The time is the Fourth of July, and appropriate arrangement has been made for a patriotic festival and ball, at the Post. *Kate Kennion* has come from the Fort and joined the ladies, to enjoy the festival. There, in the lonely



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outpost of civilization in Montana, even as in populous and brilliant Brussels, on the night before Waterloo, the ball begins, even while the menace of danger and death draws ever nearer. *Scar-Brow* has desired, more than anything else, occasion for an outbreak. After the angry parting from *General Kennion* a small detachment of troopers from the Post is treacherously and through the cowardice of *Parlow* overwhelmed in an ambushade, and while the guests of the Post are dancing and frolicking in one room *General Kennion*, in another, is receiving dispatch after dispatch by telegraph from Fort Assiniboine apprising him of a spreading insurrection among the Indians; of messengers murdered, troops embattled against overwhelming odds, intercepted appeals for help, and the swiftly approaching peril of an Indian besiegement of the Post. Then, suddenly, telegraphic communication ceases and the yells of the savages denote that the investment of the stockade has begun. One hope—and but one—remains: that of apprising the Fort, by messenger, of the desperate situation of the Post. *Lieutenant Hawksworth*, every chance against him, undertakes to attempt the passage of the cordon of Indians surrounding the beleaguered garrison, and he goes forth, to almost certain death. The poor remains of white men, with the women and children,

accused by  
Parlow of  
cowardice  
in the  
ambush



are left to face hundreds of savages, wrought to frenzy and capable of demoniac cruelty almost equal to that of the educated, civilized Germans of the present day.

Then comes one of the most effective acts of the kind that I have ever seen. The place is within the stockade of logs surrounding the Post. There has been an all-night vigil, with fierce, intermittent fighting. The time is just before daybreak. The first faint gray of light is beginning to steal into the sky; there is a reflected glow of distant fires, and, far off, yet clear and indescribably horrible, are heard the "blip-blip" of the Indian war-drums and the shrill, hideous cries of the savage warriors, working themselves to frenzy for the last murderous rush to storm and overwhelm the defenders of the Post. A parley has been sought with *Scar-Brow*, and he rides up, heard but unseen, in the slowly growing light, contemptuously secure and safe under protection of the white man's flag of truce. At the same time his daughter, a gentle girl, friendly to the whites, making her way into the fortress to bring water for the garrison, has been mistaken for a foe, has been fired on and hit by a sentry but has stoically persevered and made her way in. *General Kennion* speaks from the stockade to *Scar-Brow*, warns him of the punishment sure to follow his rebellion, and appeals to him to restrain



and withdraw his rebellious warriors. The savage is bitterly contemptuous in his answer; the men within the Post shall die,—those that die fighting the fortunate ones; the women, in particular the *General's* daughter, shall *not be killed!* *Kennion* cries out to the ruffian, warning him that *his* daughter, little *Fawn Afraid*, is at that moment in the Post and that she is hostage for the safety of the women and the garrison. There is a pause: in the reptile nature of *Scar-Brow* there is a strong affection for his daughter; then he speaks: "Show her to me—let me *see* her," he demands; and as, standing unseen outside the stockade among the sagebrush, he makes this demand, his daughter, within, reels and falls and the doctor, tending her, whispers to the *General* "She's *dead*, sir!" It is a situation of terrible significance. The Indian leader waits for a moment, then he denounces the *General* as a liar, —and the next instant the wild hoof-beats of his horse are heard as he gallops away.

A situation even more poignant ensues. There is a ripple of shots—then a pause. *Kate Kennion* steals from the shadow of the stockade: she has heard the parley,—she knows her danger: on her knees she begs her loving father, brave, noble old man, when the last terrible storm of attack shall come, when there is no other alternative, that he will, with



his own hand, shoot her dead. This the agonized father promises to do. Then, suddenly through the heavy silence, bursts the infernal din of the Indian war-cries—the increasing crackle of rifle shots—the devoted garrison answering, while ammunition lasts, shot for shot—and then the poor old father takes his daughter in his arms, kisses her farewell, causes her to kneel, bids her pray to God, and as, clasping his hand in both hers, she sinks upon her knees and begins the Lord's Prayer, he slowly draws his revolver: "Our Father which art in heaven," the poor child's lips murmur—and in the breathing pause is heard the single sharp click of the pistol-hammer being raised—"hallowed be thy name: thy kingdom come"—and slowly the weapon begins to turn toward her—"thy will be done on earth"—and the barrel almost touches her temple—"as it is in heaven"—"WAIT!"—and frantically she thrusts the pistol from her: the father believes she is unnerved—wrenches his weapon free—is about to do his deed of dreadful mercy—his child seizes the pistol barrel—"WAIT—WAIT!" she cries—and, faint, far-off, yet clear, unmistakable, thrilling, what she has heard before is now heard by the audience—the cavalry-bugle blowing "Charge!" Then follows the rapidly increasing beat of horses' hoofs—the crackle of rifle fire, fiercer and fiercer—



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the wild cries of the savages—the increasing tumult of galloping steeds as, struck behind, they break and fly, and the successful *Hawksworth* and the relieving reinforcements sweep up, driving the enemy before them to save the garrison and “The Girl I Left Behind Me.”

That the *situations*, with one exception, are not new is known to all persons of experience, whether of life or art. The situation, invented by Belasco, of the death of *Fawn Afraid*, in the moment when *General Kennion* warns her father, *Scar-Brow*, that her life and safety depend upon those of the women and the garrison, is new; the others, in form, are old: the ball on the eve of battle has never been more imaginatively used than by Byron, in “*Childe Harold*”; the representation of the father who is to kill his daughter to save her from outrage is, in substance, *Virginius* and *Virginia*; the rescue of the beleagured garrison is the climax scene of Boucicault’s “*Jessie Brown*; or, *The Relief of Lucknow*” over again, with a difference. But what of it? The dramatic situations possible in human life are limited in number. In “The Girl I Left Behind Me” the treatment of the situations is fresh, vivid, vital. I have read that those situations are made to order and “merely theatrical.” That is untrue. There is not an essential situation in this play that is improbable,



for there is not an essential situation or experience in it that might not happen, nor one that has not happened in the region and period designated. The play, of course, has faults, and they are as obvious as need be, to please even the most captious disciple of detraction. There is a story of a Mormon preacher who deemed it desirable to convince his auditors that "the Lord was but a man, as other men," and who undertook to do so by citations from Holy Writ. "The Lord *saw*," he quoted—therefore the Lord had eyes; "the Lord *heard*"—therefore he had ears; "the Lord *spake*"—therefore he had a mouth and vocal organs; "the Lord *sat*"—therefore the Lord had hinder parts, and so following. That is very much the method of criticasters: they clamber and crawl about upon a work of art with a foot-rule and a plumb-bob of censure, and seem to find delight and to suppose they have fulfilled the duty of criticism when they have ascertained and enumerated the defects or faults of the work under consideration. The impartial critic, on the other hand, who studies "The Girl I Left Behind Me" will, I think, most strongly feel a mingled regret and wonder that, when a play of such exceptional merit had been created, the comparatively small and easy amount of additional labor required to relieve it of every considerable defect should have been withheld. The



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necessity of completing it in a definite time and Belasco's anxious and harassed situation may, no doubt, explain the lack of needfully scrupulous revision, though they make it no less deplorable. The "comedy" elements, the passages between young *Dr. Penwick* and *Wilber's Ann*, are juvenile, thin, and weak, and (the most serious fault in the play, which easily could have been obviated) there is no adequate reason provided why *Kate Kennion*, loving *Lieutenant Hawksworth*, to whom eventually she is united, *Parlow* being slain, should ever have engaged herself to wed that skulking traitor. But, set against it every objection that can be raised, "The Girl I Left Behind Me" remains a work of sterling merit and an honor to its authors. The atmosphere is pure. The characters are veritable. The events are credible. The sentiment is elemental and sincere. The action is definite and fluent. The dramatic effect, to the end of the Third Act, is cumulative and thrilling. The treatment of the different persons,—especially of *Major Burleigh*, *General Kennion*, *Kate Kennion*, and *Scar-Brow*,—is remarkably felicitous; and the influence is stimulative of manliness, gallantry, and heroism. The play was splendidly stage-managed and superbly acted,—the elements of illusion and thrilling suspense, in the Second and Third acts, being perfectly created and



sustained. A remarkably artistic performance, instinct with authority, power, bitter pride, malevolence and cruelty, was given by Theodore Roberts, as *Scar-Brow*. The obnoxious character of *Lieutenant Parlow*—an exceedingly well dramatized scoundrel—is one that requires a fine order of histrionic talent for its adequate representation, and that requirement was entirely fulfilled by Nelson Wheatcroft, who personated him with minute precision, yet in such a way as to win pity for his weakness and miserable failure and death, as well as to inspire antipathy for his wickedness. Sydney Armstrong acted with inspiring vigor and feeling as *Kate Kennion*, and Frank Mordaunt with force, dignity, and reticence as the *General*. Not many persons, surely, could have gazed on the climax of the Third Act of this play without tear-dimmed eyes. W. H. Thompson, who played *Major Burleigh*, gave a picture of sturdy, simple manhood, suffering with fortitude, such as has seldom adorned our Stage. It has ever seemed to me that some of the extreme enthusiasm generally bestowed on “natural method” and “perfection of detail” as exemplified in the performances of foreign actors on our Stage might, more justly, have been bestowed on the original production of “The Girl I Left Behind Me.” There was, however, no lack of general appreciation. The play



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ran at the Empire till June 24, 1898, receiving 288 consecutive performances. This was the original cast:

<i>General Kennion</i> .....	Frank Mordaunt.
<i>Major Burleigh</i> .....	Frank Thompson.
<i>Lieut. Edgar Hawksworth</i> .....	William Morris.
<i>Lieut. Morton Parlow</i> .....	Nelson Wheatcroft.
<i>Dicks</i> .....	Thomas Oberle.
<i>Orderly McGlynn</i> .....	James O. Barrows.
<i>Private Jones</i> .....	Orrin Johnson.
<i>Dr. Arthur Penwick</i> .....	Cyril Scott.
<i>Dick Burleigh</i> .....	Master "Wallie" Eddinger.
<i>Andy Jackson</i> .....	Joseph Adelman.
<i>John Ladru, or Scar-Brow</i> .....	Theodore Roberts.
<i>Fell-An-Ox</i> .....	Frank Lathrop.
<i>Silent Tongue</i> .....	Arthur Hayden.
<i>Kate Kennion</i> .....	Sydney Armstrong.
<i>Lucy Hawksworth</i> .....	Odette Tyler.
<i>Wilber's Ann</i> .....	Edna Wallace.
<i>Fawn Afraid</i> .....	Katharine Florence.

After the first week Stella Teuton replaced Odette Tyler as *Lucy Hawksworth*; and on March 27, 28 and (matinée) 29 Emmett Corrigan replaced Wheatcroft as *Lieutenant Parlow*. On March 29, at night, the play was acted with the following cast:

<i>General Kennion</i> .....	Maclyn Arbuckle.
<i>Major Burleigh</i> .....	Mart E. Heisey.
<i>Lieut. Edgar Hawksworth</i> .....	Harold Russell.
<i>Lieut. Morton Parlow</i> .....	Henry Herman.



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<i>Dicks</i> .....	G. E. Bryant.
<i>Orderly McGlynn</i> .....	J. P. MacSweeney.
<i>Private Jones</i> .....	Frank Dayton.
<i>Dr. Arthur Penwick</i> .....	Harry Mills.
<i>Dick Burleigh</i> .....	Master George Enos.
<i>Andy Jackson</i> .....	T. S. Guise.
<i>John Ladru, or Scar-Brow</i> .....	Harry G. Carleton.
<i>Fell-An-Ox</i> .....	William Redstone.
<i>Silent Tongue</i> .....	Arthur Hayden.
<i>Kate Kennion</i> .....	Mrs. Berlan Gibbs.
<i>Lucy Hawksworth</i> .....	Irene Everell.
<i>Wilber's Ann</i> .....	Lottie Altar.
<i>Fawn Afraid</i> .....	Bijou Fernandez.

The original company was conveyed to Chicago, and there, during the World's Columbian Exposition in that city, it performed "The Girl I Left Behind Me" at the Schiller, now (1917) the Garrick, Theatre, for many weeks.

### THE VALUE OF SUGGESTION IN ART.

In the stage history of this play there is a significant and important illustration of the vital principle in dramatic writing,—often recognized and expounded by Belasco, yet sometimes by him ignored,—of the value of *suggestion* instead of *realism* in creation of effect,—the device, that is, so well expressed by Wordsworth in the line "part



*seen, imagined part.*" Writing with regard to what he learned from dramatization, at first literal, afterward suggestive, of an incident witnessed by him during his wild Virginia City days,—the funeral of a poor, misled girl who died in a vile resort,—Belasco says:

"About this time [1874-'75?] I think it was that I completed my play, 'The Doll Master,' which served so many emotional actresses on the road. It was founded on many incidents in my Virginia City career, and I remember how much I made of the scene occurring in the house of Annie Grier. I even went to the extreme of introducing the casket of the dead girl, and her weeping companions around it. Then it was that I learned my first big lesson in *suggestion*—a lesson which has been one of the greatest that has ever been brought home to me. As a dramatist it was not incumbent on me to show everything to the audience—only enough to stimulate the imagination. My task was to let the audience know that somewhere near was the casket. How many times since then have I spent hours and hours devising the best means of thus appealing to the imagination. In the olden days when there was a battle scene a scanty crowd of supers was marshalled upon the stage in farcical fashion, and you could hear the tin armor rattle as the warriors fought half-heartedly. This matter of suggestion being uppermost in my mind, it occurred to me that much more effect could be gained, as far as proportion and magnitude were concerned, by having those fights off stage. I put this theory of mine into practice when the time came for me to produce my 'The Girl I Left Behind Me.' The audience heard the Indians chanting,



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and heard the approach of the United States soldiers off stage, and they did not know whether there were ten or ten thousand men at hand. It is my impression that this was the first instance of suggested warfare seen in the East."

The principle here expounded is exactly right,—and, as used in the original production of "The Girl I Left Behind Me," it was splendidly successful. Yet when that drama was revived, March 12, 1894, at the Academy of Music, where it ran till June 2, Belasco, deferring to an alleged or assumed requirement of popular taste, introduced, at the climax of the Third Act, a troop of mounted cavalry, which dashed upon the stage—and, though popular enough with the "groundlings," spoiled the artistic effect of the play.

An interesting sidelight with regard to the writing of "The Girl I Left Behind Me" is provided in the following fragment of reminiscence by Belasco, —though, whether consciously or not, it is certain that the influence of Boucicault's "Jessie Brown" (which he had produced in San Francisco in his stock company days) operated on his mind in writing his Indian drama:



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A SUGGESTIVE REMINISCENCE OF FRONTIER DAYS.

Writing of the inception of this play, Belasco says:

"During the 'Heart of Maryland' days, when I was in the South, I met Mrs. George Crook, widow of General George Crook, who fought in the Civil War and afterwards gained fame as an Indian fighter. Mrs. Crook delighted in relating her husband's exploits and I delighted in hearing them. Her tales were exciting, and the general's uniform, his sword and pistols, his boots and spurs, made the scenes she was describing very convincing and in my mind I dramatized everything she told me.

"I always accompanied the general," said Mrs. Crook, "and shared many of his dangers." Immediately there came before me the spectacle of a woman within easy reach of the firing-line, facing the anguish and uncertainty of never seeing her husband alive again, and her own terrible fate if the battle went against him. One incident impressed me particularly. "The general had rounded up a band of Indians whom he had been pursuing for some time," said Mrs. Crook, "and the place where he was to give them battle was so close to our camp that he was in great distress for my safety. He condemned himself bitterly for having permitted me to come with him. If the battle were lost, we in the camp would be at the mercy of the Indians. An orderly was holding the general's horse, but my husband could not bear to leave our tent. Three times he started and returned. He and I once made an agreement that were I in danger of being captured I was to shoot myself. And now, under the stress of great necessity, he reminded me of the compact, and saw that my revolver was in good order.



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We read the Bible together, prayed, kissed, and parted. All through the night I sat in the camp, knowing if the battle were lost I must die before the savages could surround us. I heard the sounds of firing, and knew the fighting was desperate. After hours of waiting I heard hurried steps. Some one was running towards my tent. I grasped my pistol, thinking my time had come. "We've licked 'em," I heard a soldier cry. He had been sent by the general to tell me all was well. I sank to the ground, overcome by the relief, after the suspense I had endured. You can imagine my joy when the general came back to me!

"I had always intended to dramatize this adventure of Mrs. Crook's, and decided to do it now. This was the inspiration for 'The Girl I Left Behind Me.'"

### BELASCO AND CHARLES FROHMAN.

Belasco and Charles Frohman were intimate friends during many years. Their amicable relations continued until some time after the Theatrical Syndicate became operative, and, although then temporarily interrupted, were renewed before Frohman's death. In the Spring of 1893 Belasco, conscious of crippling restraint in his activities in theatrical business life, became dissatisfied with Frohman, particularly as to his managerial connection with the presentment of Mrs. Carter in "Miss Helyett." Some disquietude occurred, but no serious dissension arose, as the following letter, showing Frohman in an amiable light, sufficiently indicates.



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This epistle relates to negotiations concerning possible productions in London of "The Girl I Left Behind Me," "The Heart of Maryland" (then unfinished), and "The Younger Son,"—the latter being meant by "your new play that goes on here at the Empire."

A CHARLES FROHMAN LETTER.

(*Charles Frohman to David Belasco.*)

"Empire Theatre, New York,

"June 15, 1893.

"MY DEAR DAVE:—

"I have not written you in reply to your second letter to me, hoping that you might run in and see me. Roeder tells me that you are very busy on your play and could not say when you could run over to see me.

"First: I wish to say that I have made no arrangements in London for the production of 'The Girl I Left Behind Me,' or the new play. The points in this regard I prefer giving you personally.

"Second: I extremely regret the several censures you have made in respect to my end of the work in connection with 'Miss Helyett.' I do not think that you have given me credit for the absolute personal interest in the matter that I have taken, as far as you are concerned, and which went far beyond the business part of the enterprise. I think, viewing the fact that the opera itself did not make a sensation, that I stayed with you, in the matter, to the last, and should have continued, no matter how long we were together in the thing. Whether or not you have thought over these



facts, and my determination in the matter, when you see the thing from the start, I don't know. I felt that you did.

"Now in regard to the new play—'Maryland'—I want you to arrange the thing in any way that you like. I prefer losing the play itself to your friendship, which I was in hopes was strong and solid, in spite of everything. I am perfectly willing to have you make any arrangement that you may think best for the play. I would rather withdraw than to have matters in a business way come up during the season that would, in any way, annoy you, as far as I am concerned, and which constantly seem to come up, when there are a number of people concerned with an enterprise. I say to you again, don't consider me in any way; but, under any circumstances, I should like to do the following for you, if you feel disposed to have me do it:

"I will furnish you with theatres to play the piece in. I will absolutely protect the route for you, and as you wish it, in any way. I should like to protect the piece in England for you, for, if it is very successful, it would do no harm to spend a little money to have Mrs. Carter play the piece over there, three or four weeks next Summer. The arrangement can easily be made, if the play turns out what you think it will. I should like to furnish you with any people that you care to have, that I may have. In fact, do anything in my power for you, or continue my interest in any way that you may suggest; but it is impossible to give the personal time and attention over to the work that I feel you expect of me, and which it is impossible to give; and that is the reason the handling of plays comes so easy. When they are once started, I do not have to give them attention. If they are successful [then], the season will run [them] along in their own way. At any rate, I am entirely in



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your hands in regard to the matter and hope the outcome may be that it will not interfere with the friendship that I feel sure has existed between us.

"In regard to my announcement on my return here: you will notice that I did not speak of your new play that goes on here at the Empire. My intention was simply to give a list of the work I had accomplished abroad, because the papers insisted upon having it. If I could have had my own way I would not have spoken of any of the plays I have secured, but it was necessary to do so, and as the list looks very English and French I prefix my remarks by showing a list of American authors that I have been making arrangements with, previous to my sailing, so as to show that I was still doing American work, and to save any comment on this point;—and, naturally, [I] consider your piece to come under the head of plays that I had already made arrangements for.

"I should like very much, if possible, for you to give over a little time to Unitt, in arranging the models of your new play. I want to commence on same, just as soon as Unitt is through with his present work, so as to have the production ready, when we open with 'Liberty Hall' here.

"Yours truly,

"CHARLES FROHMAN."

### A BAFFLED ENTERPRISE IN CHICAGO.

Belasco, though his disagreements with Charles Frohman were, for the time, amicably adjusted, was not acquiescent to remain in a position which, continuously maintained, would have kept him still



a carrier of bricks to the theatrical buildings of other men. He was now forty years old. For more than twenty years his lot had been chiefly toil and hardship: experience had taught him that "living is striving": abundant opportunity had been provided for him to learn the truth so tersely stated by Wendell Phillips that the world is made up of two kinds of persons,—those who *do* things, and those who stand by to tell others how things should be done. Though not embittered, he was in danger of becoming so, and he felt more than ever resolved to *make* a place for himself in the managerial field, if he could not *find* one. "I, too," he has said, "as well as Charles Frohman, had my dreams of a theatre of *my own*,—a place where I could do things in my own way,—and *I meant to have it!*"

Finding it impossible to obtain support such as he desired and a satisfactory opening in New York (notwithstanding Charles Frohman's offer to furnish theatres for presentation of "The Heart of Maryland"), Belasco now determined to try R. M. Hooley, of Chicago, who had manifested interest and confidence in him, during the engagement in that city of "The Ugly Duckling"; who, perhaps, remembered his early mistake in refusing "Hearts of Oak," and who certainly, like all other theatrical workers of the time, had been favorably impressed



by the success of "The Girl I Left Behind Me." Belasco at first wrote to Hooley about Mrs. Carter, but, later, he visited Chicago, for the purpose of stating his project in detail. There he found that Mr. "Harry" Powers, Hooley's agent and business manager of his theatre, was strongly opposed to the idea of bringing out Mrs. Carter in that city. Powers frankly said: "I have advised Mr. Hooley to have *nothing whatever* to do with your venture. This is the most fashionable theatre in Chicago: Mrs. Carter is not wanted here, and we cannot afford to make enemies." Hooley, however, was in a more propitious mood, and expressed himself willing to rely on Belasco's judgment, if he really believed that in Mrs. Carter he had a fine actress and also that he had a suitable new play in which to present her. Belasco fervently extolled the ability of Mrs. Carter, and read to him "The Heart of Maryland." Hooley was favorably impressed and agreed to produce the play, presenting Mrs. Carter in the central part, provided that Belasco would agree to give him an option on all plays which he might thereafter write. The influences which, later, crystallized in the Theatrical Syndicate, were already beginning to make themselves felt in the theatrical world, and Hooley, like many other managers, perceived a danger and was wary of it.



"I purpose to produce my own 'attractions,'" he informed Belasco, "and let the Eastern producers go hang!"

Hooley offered fair terms, the agreement for the presentment of Mrs. Carter as a "star" in "The Heart of Maryland" was formally made, and thus cheered and encouraged Belasco returned to New York, to prepare his play for production and engage a company to act in it. "As I was leaving," he said, "Hooley delighted me by asking me to send him a large framed portrait of Mrs. Carter, to hang in the lobby of his theatre." In New York Belasco read his play to Maurice Barrymore (1848-1905) and E. J. Henley (1862-1898) and engaged them for the company, and he was engaging other members thereof when Hooley suddenly died,—September 10, 1898. Mr. Powers was placed in charge of the theatre which had been Hooley's, and, as he promptly notified Belasco, made a long-term contract with Messrs. Klaw & Erlanger to furnish him with "attractions" for that house, and repudiated the engagement which Hooley had made: "I was politely kicked out," said Belasco, "and that was the end of *that!* It was too late in the year to make new arrangements for that season about 'Maryland,' and, besides, I didn't know exactly what to do or which way to turn. If 'The Younger Son,'



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—which came next and on which I worked hard,—had proved successful, things might have turned out differently; but that fizzled, and afterward I seemed to be just as far as ever from being able to strike out for myself.”

### “THE YOUNGER SON.”

The Empire closed for the season with the final performance there of “The Girl I Left Behind Me,” and reopened on August 21, with a performance of “Liberty Hall,” which ran till October 28. Meantime, Belasco, having heard of the success of a German play entitled “Schlimme Saat” (“Evil Seeds”), had bought the American rights and, on receiving the manuscript,—knowing that Frohman’s establishment at the Empire Theatre was not yet entirely secure, and being wishful still further to help him,—had immediately laid aside “The Heart of Maryland” and addressed himself to making an English version of the German drama. “They proved evil, even fatal, seeds to *me*,” he said. “I know now that six months’ time would have been little enough for so great a work, but I made a version of it in four weeks, working night and day. When it was completed, I took the play to ‘C. F.’ and in response to his suggestion, called it ‘The



Younger Son.' " Why Belasco should have deemed this German play a "great work" I do not understand. It is, in fact, a tediously prolix and sometimes morbid story dealing with the history of two brothers, the elder a selfish, heartless profligate, the younger an ambitious artist, both the idols of a foolishly fond mother. The artist is delighted by the news that his favorite picture (a work of no special merit) has been bought by a rich picture fancier, who is willing to send him to Italy to study. This apparent benevolence is, in fact, a plot to get him out of the way and rob him of the girl he loves, who has agreed to sell herself in order to get for him this opportunity to study abroad. In Belasco's English version all the hydrostatic pressure that the story could possibly be made to carry had been added, but, as the performance of "Evil Seeds" was a complete failure, it would be superfluous to dwell upon it. The play was produced at the Empire on October 24 and withdrawn on October 27, after four performances. It has never been revived. For the purpose of record the cast is appended:

<i>Paul Kirkland</i> .....	Henry Miller.
<i>John Kirkland</i> .....	James E. Wilson.
<i>Simeon Brewster</i> .....	William Faversham.
<i>Clarkson MacVeigh</i> .....	W. H. Thompson.
<i>Peter Bogart</i> .....	W. H. Crompton.



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<i>Dick Major</i> .....	Cyril Scott.
<i>Nell Armitage</i> .....	Viola Allen.
<i>Mrs. Kirkland</i> .....	Mrs. D. P. Bowers.
<i>Margaret</i> .....	Odette Tyler.
<i>Dolly Chester</i> .....	Edna Wallace Hopper.
<i>Agnes</i> .....	Edith Marion.
<i>Tommy</i> .....	Master John McKeever.
<i>Bess</i> .....	Little Percita West.

Writing about this dismal failure, Belasco says:

"I had no doubt about the merits of the First and Second acts, but the Third Act needed slow and careful work in the writing. The fate of the piece depended upon one situation in this Act,—a period of about two minutes. With this situation made convincing, the play's success was assured. On the opening night, everything went well up to this point. "C. F.," I whispered, 'if we pass this crisis we are safe.' But it was not long before I whispered disconsolately, "C. F.," we have failed.' And not waiting for the supper party I slipped away in the darkness and walked the streets all night."

The next day Belasco earnestly advised Frohman to withdraw the play at once, and, after brief hesitation, this was done—"Liberty Hall" being revived at the Empire, and Belasco, presently, turning again to work on "The Heart of Maryland."





Photograph by Sarony.

Belasco's Collection.

BELASCO, ABOUT 1893







## FIGHTING FOR A CHANCE.

There are, I believe, few instances in theatrical history of a more protracted experience of the "hope deferred" which "maketh the heart sick" than befell Belasco with this fine melodrama. The subject, and, roughly, the story, of that play were in his mind when first he undertook the training and direction of Mrs. Leslie Carter (1889): again and again he endeavored to have his play brought on the stage,—but it was not produced till more than six years after he had resolved to use it as a vehicle for that actress, and within that period he altered and reshaped it at least four times. After the death of Hooley and the failure of "The Younger Son" he was for some time dejected and inert. Then, reviewing the manuscript of his "Maryland," he imbibed belief that the play lacked sufficient verisimilitude to Southern life. "What I needed most," he said, "was atmosphere; so I decided to visit a Southern town and meet some typical Southern families. Mrs. Carter, her mother, and I went to Oakland, Maryland [1894?], where I added the finishing touches to the play. When we reached a certain point I bade my associates good-by and boarded a train for New York, to make another attempt to find a manager." Speak-



ing of the experience immediately preceding the actual accomplishment of his long obstructed purpose, Belasco told me: "It has always seemed very strange that I should have been rebuffed on almost every side with that play. If there did not exist a strong opposition to my getting an independent foothold as a manager, *why* was my play of 'Maryland' refused, over and over again? Look at the list of successes which I had brought out, *for others*, in the preceding ten years, including 'La Belle Russe,' 'May Blossom,' 'The Highest Bidder,' 'The Wife,' 'Lord Chumley,' 'The Charity Ball,' 'Men and Women,' and 'The Girl I Left Behind Me.' Good, bad, or indifferent—whatever anybody thinks about them—there is no room for argument as to the *business* proposition. Those were *all* great big popular successes—*money-getters*. Why, when I was more than usually hard-up, I had been able, often, to get money in advance on my royalties on plays that had not even been begun. Yet, with a finished play, a *good* one, one I'd worked on for years, that I *knew* was good and that anybody could see was good; with an actress for whom the leading part had been made as carefully as though it were a dress for her to wear, I could not get a hearing. I think pretty nearly every producing manager in New York refused that play. Why? I never



*knew*—and I don't *know* now: yet I believed then and I believe now that, underlying all my difficulty, was far more than any antagonism to Mrs. Carter; that the men whom afterward I fought for so many years were glad enough to have me work *for them* as a stage manager and stock playwright, but that they were *not* willing I should get established as an independent manager."

This view of Belasco's position has been stated before, and I have heard it ridiculed. In my judgment the record of facts fully supports it. It cannot be proved, but "if imputation and strong circumstances, which lead directly to the door of truth, will give you satisfaction, you may have't." There is the record—and readers must decide for themselves. Writing of his dark days in 1894, Belasco has declared:

"My private possessions, my library (containing some very valuable historical books),—my few antiques,—everything—had been sold. As a last economy, I decided to give up my little office at Carnegie Hall. 'This breaks the camel's back! This is the last straw!' Mrs. Carter said. 'Mr. David, I'm in the way. They want your manuscript, but the fact of the matter is, they won't have me. You've kept your promise and done all you could, but you can't do any more; let some one else have my part.' It was a case of the blind leading the blind, but I refused to give up.

"I left her and walked down Broadway, where I came face



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to face with Paul Potter. 'Dave,' he exclaimed, 'I was looking for you. A. M. Palmer has been very unfortunate of late and needs a play. Read "The Heart of Maryland" to him.'

"In less than an hour Paul Potter and I were on our way to Stamford. At last my luck had turned! Palmer accepted my play."

Negotiations with Palmer,—who at the time of Belasco's withdrawal from the Lyceum Theatre had been sympathetic with him, had placed the stages of two theatres at his disposal for rehearsal of Mrs. Carter, and had even then shown some interest in the projected play,—were brought to a satisfactory issue, and, in August, 1894, a contract was formally made whereby Palmer agreed to produce "The Heart of Maryland," "with his own stock company, known as 'A. M. Palmer's Stock Company,' at Palmer's Theatre, in the City of New York, not later than January 1, 1895," and also agreed that whether in New York or elsewhere Mrs. Carter should be employed "to play the part entitled *Maryland Calvert*." Active preparations to produce "The Heart of Maryland" immediately were begun; scenery was designed, built and painted, involving an investment of more than \$8,500; but Palmer was heavily involved, financially, and the rehearsals, which Belasco was eager to begin, were



postponed from week to week. At last the date limit specified in the agreement passed, yet Belasco continued to hope and to expect that Palmer would fulfil his agreement. One day, however, happening to meet Charles Frohman, that manager told him: "I am very sorry for you, but Palmer won't be able to produce 'The Heart of Maryland.'" Belasco at once went to Palmer and asked him to state his purpose,—“Because,” he said, “I mean that play *shall* be produced! If you can't do it—somebody else *can*.” Palmer, foreseeing the success of the play, wished to hold it; if Belasco could have been given any reasonable assurance that, eventually, the elder manager would be able to bring it out, he would have been glad to wait; but, after some hesitation, Palmer admitted that he could not set any definite time, manifesting, at first, a disposition to prevent Belasco from placing his drama elsewhere. Realizing, however, that the passage of the date-limit within which he had agreed to produce the play had, in fact, released Belasco from his contract with him, he finally acquiesced, asking the latter to take and pay for the scenery which had been made for it. This Belasco promised should be done, as soon as the play was produced.

Once more opportunity had seemed to be within his grasp: once more it eluded him: yet he perse-



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vered and resolutely resumed his quest of a producer. Writing of the manner in which, at last, some months after the collapse of the arrangement with Palmer, he found one, Belasco has recorded incidents of his search and the process of his ultimate success:

"One day I met Mr. Henry Butler in New York. He suggested that we interest wealthy men and form a stock company. 'But let's try another plan first,' he said. At this time three enterprising young men were the lessees of the Herald Square Theatre. They were 'Charlie' Evans, who made a fortune with Hoyt's 'A Parlor Match,' F. C. Whitney, and Max Blieman, a picture dealer. They opened the house with a musical comedy, but wanted to produce a 'straight' drama. 'I'll go down and see them myself,' Butler volunteered, 'and you wait here for me.' He brought back good news. 'They have confidence in you,' was the cheerful message, 'and they are willing to "gamble."' "

"Blieman called on Palmer and paid cash for the scenery made at the time Palmer intended to produce the play. The play was to be the opening attraction at the Herald Square, under joint management.

"But early in the summer Blieman sent for me. 'Whitney has "cold feet",' he remarked, 'and has dropped out.' 'There are still two of you left,' I answered. Several weeks after this Blieman sent for me again and this time he was in despair. 'Charlie's dropped out now,' he said; 'but by — I believe in the play and I'll stick. . . .'

"The opening took place in Washington; and as I could not get into the theatre before Sunday we were not ready



to open until the middle of the week. We practically lived in the theatre. We made a great sensation on the opening night, but Washington, unfortunately, was in the grip of a financial panic, and the houses in consequence were very poor,—so poor, indeed, that Blieman's pocket was empty. He was obliged to confess that he had not enough money left to send the company back to New York. So here we were,—stranded, billed to open in New York on Monday night and no money to get there.

"Blieman summoned courage and made a hasty trip to New York to try to raise some money, and when I saw him in the evening he was all smiles. 'What do you think,' he confided to me, 'I've just borrowed fifteen hundred dollars from "Al" Hayman on a picture worth thirty thousand.' Here was a boy after my own heart! The fifteen hundred dollars enabled us to return to New York, and at last the poor old storm-tossed 'Heart of Maryland' had its metropolitan opening—on the strength of a pawned painting!"

"The Heart of Maryland" was acted for the first time anywhere at the Grand Opera House, Washington, D. C., October 9, 1895; and the first performance of it in New York occurred on October 22, that year, at the Herald Square Theatre. It is a meritorious and highly effective melodrama, and its New York production marks a vital point in the career of its indefatigable and brilliantly accomplished author. When the curtain rose on its first performance in the metropolis he had been for nearly a quarter of a century toiling in the Theatre,



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working in every capacity connected with the Stage; he had written and produced, for others, plays which had received thousands of representations and to see which several millions of dollars had been paid: yet he was,—through no fault of his, no improvidence, dissipation, reckless neglect or abuse of talent,—still a struggling author, without recognized position, without place or influence in the field of theatrical management, and so poor that, if the venture failed, he had no better prospect than renewed drudgery in a subservient place, working for the profit and aggrandizement of men vastly inferior to himself in every way. Perhaps the best explanation of and commentary on this fact were supplied, several years later, when, testifying in court during trial of a lawsuit of his against the late Joseph Brooks, he said of himself:

“I have long been connected with the theatrical business and know its customs, but I know more about the stage part of it than I do about the business side. I have been a manager for twenty-five years, and have always managed to get the worst of my business affairs.”

### STORY AND PRODUCTION OF “THE HEART OF MARYLAND.”—ITS GREAT SUCCESS.

“The Heart of Maryland” belongs to the class of *post-bellum* plays represented in the years imme-





Photograph by Sarony.

Belasco's Collection.

MRS. LESLIE CARTER, ABOUT 1895







diately following the close of the American civil conflict by Boucicault's "Belle Lemar" (which was first acted at Booth's Theatre August 10, 1874), and, more recently, by Howard's "Shenandoah" and Gillette's "Held by the Enemy,"—being much superior to both the latter dramas. The scene of that play is in and near an old Colonial homestead, called "The Lilacs," inhabited by the *Calvert* family, at Boonsboro, Maryland, in the Spring of 1863. It is comprised in four acts and six scenes, requiring five sets of scenery for their display. Its action passes within about thirty-six hours and implicates about thirty persons, of whom five are important,—namely *General Hugh Kendrick*, *Colonel Alan Kendrick*, his son, *Colonel Fulton Thorpe*, *Lloyd Calvert*, and *Maryland Calvert*. *Maryland* and *Alan Kendrick* are lovers and have been betrothed, but she is passionately devoted to the Southern cause, while he ardently supports that of the North,—holding rank as a colonel in the Federal Army,—and their political difference has divided them, though without lessening their love. In the First Act *Alan*, who has been captured by the Rebels and imprisoned at Dansville, is exchanged and, in passing through Boonsboro on the way to the Union lines, he meets both his sweetheart, *Maryland*, and *Colonel Thorpe*. *Thorpe*, a Northern spy



and a double traitor, whom *Alan* has publicly flogged for blackguardly conduct and then caused to be drummed out of his regiment, holds rank as a colonel in the Rebel Army. In revenge for the humiliation to which he has been subjected *Thorpe* expedites the transport of *Alan* and other exchanged Federal prisoners, so that they shall be conveyed immediately to Charlesville,—his purpose being thus to cause their death along with that of the entire garrison at that place, which *General Kendrick*, in command of an overwhelming Confederate army, purposes to surprise by night and utterly to destroy. *Lloyd Calvert*, unknown to his family, is a Northern spy. He has learned of *General Kendrick's* plan and seeks to warn the Federal forces at Charlesville. Unable to do so, he informs *Maryland* of the projected assault and she, to save her lover, communicates knowledge of the impending danger to him, thus causing the failure of the surprise attack. 7

In the Second Act *Alan*, (supposing that the Confederate Army has moved away) rashly returns to Boonsboro, desiring to effect reconciliation with his sweetheart. *Lloyd*, trying to bring about a meeting between the lovers, speaks, ambiguously, to *Maryland* about "a Northern friend" whom he wishes her to meet for him and "detain." Later, while trying to make his way to the Union lines



with important information, *Lloyd* is shot and, dying, is detected as a spy: *Alan* is, meantime, recaptured, wearing the hat and overcoat of a Confederate officer, and *Maryland*, unaware of his identity and thinking to clear her brother's reputation as a loyal Southerner, denounces the prisoner to *General Kendrick* as the real spy. *Alan*, by order of his father, is then tried by court-martial and condemned to death.

In the Third Act *Maryland* makes her way into the Union lines and obtains from *General Hooker*, there commanding, a letter to *General Kendrick* certifying that the presence of his son, *Colonel Kendrick*, within the Confederate lines, was due to a personal, not a military, motive,—in short, that *Alan* is not a spy. Returning with this letter to her home, which has become Confederate Headquarters, *Maryland* finds that *General Kendrick* has been killed in action and that *Colonel Thorpe* is in command. *Thorpe*, whom she visits in his quarters in the old church of Boonsboro,—part of which is also used for confinement of military prisoners,—and to whom she appeals for mercy, perceiving that *Hooker's* letter, if it should reach any Confederate officer other than himself, would imperil his own life, not only refuses a reprieve for *Alan Kendrick* but orders that execution of the death sentence be hastened.



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Then, half drunken and wholly bestial, he insults the unfortunate *Alan*, who, pinioned and helpless, is on his way to the gallows and, in his presence, threatens his sweetheart with outrage. *Maryland*, in desperation, defending herself, stabs *Thorpe* with a bayonet (a weapon ingeniously introduced for this purpose among the articles accessory to the stage setting, being thrust into a table-top and used as a candlestick), wounding and disabling him. She then liberates *Alan*, who makes his escape. *Thorpe*, rallying, orders the church-bell rung, a prearranged signal warning all sentries that a prisoner has broken jail; but *Maryland*, making her way to the belfry, seizes the clapper of the great bell and, thus enacting the devoted expedient of *Bessie*, in "Curfew Must Not Ring To-night," prevents the alarm and enables her lover to make good his escape.

In the Fourth Act *Thorpe's* double duplicity has been discovered in the Rebel capital and he is ordered under arrest by *General Lee*; the Confederate troops, defeated in a general engagement, are forced to evacuate Boonsboro, and the play ends with a prospective reconciliation of the lovers.

"The Heart of Maryland," though somewhat intricate in its story (only the main thread of which has been followed in the above recital), is compact in construction, fluent and cumulative in dramatic



movement and interest, written with profound sincerity and contains passages of tender feeling and afflicting pathos. The "Curfew" expedient, if, in cool retrospect, it seems a little artificial, is, in representation, a thrillingly effective climax to an affecting portrayal of distress and danger. The first picture, exhibiting the ancestral home of the *Calvert* family, an old Colonial mansion, deep-bowered among ancient, blooming lilac bushes and bathed in the fading glow of late afternoon and sunset light, was one of truly memorable loveliness. Indeed, the scenery investment, throughout, was of exceptional beauty and dramatic appropriateness, and the manifold accessories of military environment, with all "the proud control of fierce and bloody war,"—the suggested presence and movement of large bodies of infantry and cavalry; the denoted passage of heavy artillery; the stirring sounds of martial music and of desperate battle; the red glare and dun smoke-pall of conflagration, and the various employment and manipulation of light and darkness to illustrate and intensify the dramatic theme,—were extraordinarily deft in devisement and felicitous in effect. Belasco was also peculiarly fortunate in selection of the actors who performed the principal parts in his play. The handsome person and picturesque, romantic mien of Maurice Barrymore,



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who appeared as *Alan Kendrick*, were perfectly consonant with that character; John E. Kellerd gave an impersonation of remarkable artistic merit—true to life and true to the part—as the despicable yet formidable scoundrel *Thorpe*, and Mrs. Carter, profiting richly by the zealous schooling of her mentor, embodied *Maryland Calvert* at first in a mood of piquant playfulness, veiling serious feeling, then with genuine, wild and intense passion. This was the cast in full of the performance at the Herald Square Theatre:

<i>General Hugh Kendrick</i> .....	Frank Mordaunt.
<i>Colonel Alan Kendrick</i> .....	Maurice Barrymore.
<i>Colonel Fulton Thorpe</i> .....	John E. Kellerd.
<i>Lieutenant Robert Telfair</i> .....	Cyril Scott.
<i>Provost Sergeant Blount</i> .....	Odell Williams.
<i>Tom Boone</i> .....	Henry Weaver, Jr.
<i>Lloyd Calvert</i> .....	Edward J. Morgan.
<i>The Sexton</i> .....	John W. Jennings.
<i>Uncle Dan'l</i> .....	Scott Cooper
<i>Captain Leighton</i> .....	A. Pearson.
<i>Captain Blair</i> .....	A. C. Mora.
<i>Lieutenant Hayne</i> .....	W. H. Foy.
<i>Aides-de-Camp to General Kendrick</i> ....	{ Frank Stanwick. Robert McIntyre. William Johnson.
<i>Corporal Day</i> .....	Edwin Meyer.
<i>Corporal</i> .....	H. E. Bostwick.
<i>Bludsoe</i> .....	Edwin F. Mayo.
<i>Little True Blue</i> .....	"Johnny" McKeever.



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<i>O'Hara</i> .....	J. H. Hazelton.
<i>Ruggles</i> .....	Thomas Matlock.
<i>Forbes</i> .....	Joseph Maxwell.
<i>Phil</i> .....	Joseph A. Webber.
<i>Sentry</i> .....	E. J. Boyce.
<i>Scout</i> .....	C. H. Robertson.
<i>Mrs. Clairborne Gordon</i> .....	Helen Tracy.
<i>Maryland Calvert</i> .....	Mrs. Leslie Carter.
<i>Phæbe Yancey</i> .....	Georgie Busby.
<i>Nanny McNair</i> .....	Angela McCall.

Popular approval of the representation was immediate and bounteous and there was little critical cavilling in the press. On the first night in New York, after the Third Act, the audience many times called the entire company before the curtain and, at last, Belasco, in an obviously painful state of nervous excitement, responding to vociferous demands, made a brief and grateful speech, in the course of which he said:

"It is very difficult for me to speak, to thank you. Your kind and generous approval to-night means so very, very much to Mrs. Carter and all the splendid company that has worked so loyally for the success of this play. It means more to me than any words of mine can say. This production to-night is the culmination of twenty-five years of work; of hard, hard work and often bitter disappointment. I have been a supernumerary, a call boy, an actor, a stage manager for others, an adapter of plays: now I am encouraged to hope I have proved myself a dramatist. . . . It



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is many long years since I first dreamed of an independent success in New York—a success I might keep in my own hands. If this is at last the turning of the tide that leads on to fortune, I shall never forget my debt to you: I shall strive, as long as I live, to give you, to give the people of this great and wonderful city, not only the best there is in me but the very best the Theatre can give. Thank you from my heart! I thank you—I thank you!”

It was, indeed, “the turning of the tide.” “The Heart of Maryland” was played at the Herald Square Theatre for 229 consecutive performances, and it occupied a large part of Belasco’s time and attention during the period of about two years which followed its New York production.

The season ended at the Herald Square on May 16, 1896. From about that date until June 23 Mrs. Carter and Belasco underwent the painful ordeal incident to trial of his lawsuit against N. K. Fairbank,—which, as already recorded, terminated on the latter date with a verdict in favor of the manager. In the course of the next six weeks Belasco made a revision of Clay M. Greene’s “Under the Polar Star,” which was produced by William A. Brady, August 20, at the New York Academy of Music. On October 5, at the Broad Street, Philadelphia, the first tour of “The Heart of Maryland” was begun, under the personal direction of its author. That tour was everywhere amply successful and it





Photograph by Sarony.

Belasco's Collection.

**MRS. LESLIE CARTER AS *MARYLAND CALVERT*,  
IN "THE HEART OF MARYLAND"**







lasted without special incident,—except that toward its close Belasco purchased (April, 1897) the interest of Mr. Max Bleiman in the production,—until the following May 1. The season was ended on that date at the Grand Opera House, New York, and Belasco soon afterward visited San Francisco. The third season of "The Heart of Maryland" began at the scene of so much of his early experience, the Baldwin Theatre, in that city, August 17, and continued in unabated prosperity for about seven months.

"THE FIRST BORN."—A SUCCESS AND A FAILURE.

While Belasco was in San Francisco he witnessed several performances of a play called "The First Born," written by Francis Powers, which had been produced, May 10, under the management of his brother, Frederick Belasco, at the Alcazar Theatre, and he was so favorably impressed with its merits that he arranged to present that drama,—which ran for ten weeks in San Francisco,—in New York, in association with Charles Frohman. That arrangement was successfully consummated, at the Manhattan (previously the Standard) Theatre, October 5, 1897. "The First Born" is a tragic sketch of character and life in the Chinese quarter



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of old San Francisco,—a region with which the acquaintance of Belasco was peculiarly intimate and exact and one of which the mingled squalor and romance had always strongly attracted him. The posture of circumstances and experience depicted in that play is simple and direct. *Man Low Yek*, a rich Chinese merchant, has stolen *Chan Lee*, the wife of *Chan Wang*, also a Chinese and a dweller in the Chinatown. That ravagement *Wang* has borne with equanimity; but when *Chan Lee*, returning to San Francisco with her paramour, entices *Chan Toy*, their first born and only son, from him and in her endeavor to steal the child accidentally causes his death, the unfortunate *Wang* becomes at first an image of agonized paternal love and then an embodiment of implacable vengeance. The play is in two acts. In the first, Chinatown is shown in the bright light and bustle of a busy noonday and against that setting is displayed the sudden bereavement and afflicting anguish of the father. In the second, an alley-end in the same district is shown, with a glimpse of contiguous gambling hells and opium dens, under the darkening shadows of evening. There the inexorable avenger lounges, leaning against a door post,—apparently an idler smoking his evening pipe and talking with a Chinese girl, who leans from a window; in fact, vigilantly



observant of *Man Low Yek*, visible within a shop, and intent on slaying him. The alley grows dark and becomes deserted. The neighboring houses are illumined. The chink of money and the bickering chatter of unseen gamblers are heard. A police officer saunters by and disappears. *Man Low Yek* comes forth from his shop, closing it after him. Then, suddenly, as he passes, *Wang*, with fearful celerity, leaps upon him wielding a hatchet, strikes him down, drags the dead body into convenient concealment, and is back again at his former loitering place, outwardly placid, before the fire in his pipe has had time to become extinguished.

Belasco's presentment of this play in New York was a gem of histrionic illustration,—the grouping and movement of the players and the many supernumeraries, the employment of light and sound, every expedient alike of action and repose, every detail of dress, every accessory of scenic embellishment, all were so adroitly used and blended as to create an impression of perfect verisimilitude, and the spectator seemed to behold two veritable segments of Chinatown life. The acting, especially that of Mr. Powers as *Chan Wang* and of May Buckley as *Loey Tsing*, a Chinese girl who loves him, was exceptionally earnest and effective. This was the cast:



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<i>Loey Tsing</i> .....	May Buckley.
<i>Chow Pow</i> .....	Ellen Cummins.
<i>Chan Lee</i> .....	Carrie E. Powers.
<i>Dr. Pow Len</i> .....	George Osborne.
<i>Man Low Yek</i> .....	Charles Bryant.
<i>Chan Wang</i> .....	Francis Powers.
<i>Hop Kee</i> .....	J. H. Benrimo.
<i>Chum Woe</i> .....	Harry Spear.
<i>Kwakee</i> .....	John Armstrong.
<i>Duck Low</i> .....	George Fullerton.
<i>Sum Chow</i> .....	Harry Levain.
<i>A Chinese Raggicker</i> .....	Walter Belasco.
<i>A Provision Dealer</i> .....	Fong Get.
<i>Chan Toy</i> .....	Venie Wells.
<i>Way Get</i> .....	Joseph Silverstone.

<i>Tourists</i> .....	{ Ysobel Haskins.
	{ Florence Haverleigh.
	{ L. I. Fuller.
	{ Hugo Toland.

"The First Born" was acted at the Manhattan Theatre in association with "A Night Session," a farce derived from the French: later, other farces were performed with the Chinatown tragedy. Its success was decisive and it was acted in New York until December 11;—at the Manhattan from October 5 to November 6, and at the Garden Theatre (in association with an English version, by Benjamin F. Roeder, of "L'Été de St. Martin," by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy) from November



29 onward. Belasco and Frohman, elated by their American victory with this play, were eager to repeat it in London. A second company was, accordingly, at once engaged, rehearsed, and brought forward at the Manhattan,—the original company sailing for England October 23, and emerging at the Duke of York's Theatre, London, November 6. The enterprising manager William A. Brady had, however, hastened to the British capital before them with another and similar play, called "The Cat and the Cherub," which he presented at the Lyric Theatre, October 30, thus forestalling "The First Born" and causing its flat failure in London. It was withdrawn after one week, Belasco and Frohman losing about \$20,000 on their undertaking.

BELASCO'S SECOND ENGLISH VENTURE.—"THE HEART OF MARYLAND" IN LONDON.

During the dramatic season of 1897-'98 Belasco and Charles Frohman arranged with the Messrs. Gatti, managers of the Adelphi Theatre, London, for the production of "The Heart of Maryland" in the British capital. The expenses of presenting that play were large, but so, also, was public attendance on its performance, the average gross



receipts amounting to about \$11,000 a week: that is, in three seasons the public had paid a total of about one million and fifty thousand dollars to see it. Belasco's share of the profits had set him well forward in the path of prosperity and he was at last able to formulate definite plans for ventures which finally enabled him to seize a conspicuous, independent, and influential place among the foremost theatrical managers of the world. His expedition into England with Mrs. Carter and "The Heart of Maryland" was one of the first of those ventures. The utility of his play as a starring vehicle for that actress in America was practically exhausted, but he felt strongly assured of further prosperity with it abroad. Moreover, he knew that Mrs. Carter would be, by an English success, exalted in the esteem of the American public—which is in some respects provincial and is always impressed by foreign approval. And, finally, he hoped that, while in London, he would be able to obtain a suitable new play for her use. The third season of "The Heart of Maryland," accordingly, was closed at Hartford, Conn., March 26, 1898; on March 30 Mrs. Carter, the other members of the theatrical company which had been acting in it, and Belasco sailed for England on board the steamship St. Paul, and on April 8 that play was per-



formed at the Adelphi Theatre, London. It was, originally, "booked" for a season of one month, but it was received with such abundant popular favor that it was acted there, to crowded houses, for twelve weeks,—receiving about eighty performances. There was some adversity of critical comment in the press, but only one stricture then made disturbed Belasco's equanimity and has rankled in his recollection,—namely, the unwarranted and mean intimation that he had copied the stirring "mechanical effects" (so called) used in course of the performance of his play from William Gillette's "Secret Service," which had been brought out in London, May 15, 1897, at the Adelphi. Such gratuitous disparagement is characteristic of a patronizing and carping spirit frequently encountered in British journalism. Inquiry as to the facts in this case at once displays its injustice. Belasco's "The Heart of Maryland" was begun in 1890, and the "mechanical effects" employed in it were devised by its author during the four years that followed; they were, furthermore, an elaboration and improvement of various contrivances first used by him in his variant of "Not Guilty,"—San Francisco, December 24, 1878,—and some of them were used by him in "The Girl I Left Behind Me,"—January, 1893. Gillette's "Secret Service" was tried at the



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Broad Street Theatre, Philadelphia, May 13, 1895, where it failed and was at once withdrawn. After having been entirely rewritten that play was successfully produced at the Garrick Theatre, New York, October 5, 1896,—one year later than "The Heart of Maryland." "Secret Service," though a useful melodrama, is a hodge-podge fabrication (one of its most essential situations is conveyed, bodily, from "Don Cæsar de Bazan") and is in every way inferior to "The Heart of Maryland": if the production of either of those plays owed anything to that of the other, it is manifest that Belasco's could not have been the debtor.

Belasco's quest for a new drama for the use of Mrs. Carter seemed destined to be a barren one, when, as the London career of "The Heart of Maryland" was drawing toward its close, he chanced to read, in a theatrical newspaper, an outline of the plot of a French play named "Zaza," which had been produced, May 12, 1898, at the Vaudeville Theatre, Paris, and which he thought might be adapted to the use of his star. On mentioning the play to Charles Frohman and inquiring whether he knew anything about it Frohman informed him that he did not believe it would prosper in America and that, therefore, he had permitted an option on the American right of producing it to



lapse. Belasco, nevertheless, visited Paris, witnessed a performance of "Zaza," as acted by Mme. Gabrielle Réjane and her associates at the Vaudeville, and was so impressed by it that he immediately cabled Frohman, urging him to purchase the American rights of production,—which Frohman forthwith did. On June 25 the London season of "The Heart of Maryland" ended, and on September 1, on the steamship Majestic, Mrs. Carter, the "Maryland" company, and Belasco sailed for home,—the latter having entered into an engagement with Charles Frohman whereby that influential speculator in theatrical wares agreed to produce "Zaza" in partnership with him and to "present Mrs. Leslie Carter, by arrangement with David Belasco." Belasco was much elated at having made that contract. Writing about it, he says: "Patience and perseverance had won! At last I had not only a star and a play, but a partner with money, unlimited credit, and vast influence. As soon as I returned to New York I began preparations for the next season, and then I went cheerfully into exile to adapt 'Zaza.'"



"ZAZA," AND THE ETHICAL QUESTION.

Two plays have been produced by Belasco the presentment of which, in my judgment,—although both of them were received with extravagant favor by numerous writers in the press and were acted profitably and with much manifest public approbation for a long time,—should be recorded as a grievous blot on the fair record of his professional career. One of those plays is this notorious drama of "Zaza," adapted and altered by Belasco from the French original by MM. Pierre Berton (1840-1912) and Charles Simon (1850-1910); the other is the vulgar and repulsive drama called "The Easiest Way," concocted by an American journalist, Mr. Eugene Walter, containing a long-drawn portrayal expositive of the immoral character, unchaste conduct, and necessarily wretched retributive experience, of a courtesan. Both of those plays reflect the gross aspect of what Carlyle happily designated Demirepdom,—a domain of licentiousness and bestiality which should never be treated in Drama or illustrated on the Stage.

Opinion on this point is, I am aware, sharply divided. Shakespeare, we are continually reminded, speaking for himself (most inappropriately, by the way) in the character of *Hamlet*, and referring to



"the purpose of playing," says that its "end both at the first and now was, and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to *nature*; to show *virtue* her own feature, *scorn* her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

What does that mean? Does it mean that everything existent in Nature is material suitable to be presented on the Stage? Does it mean that there should be no restriction as to the choice of subjects, from "the age and body of the time," to be illustrated in public, before a mixed audience of both sexes and of all ages and conditions? No sound, convincing exposition of that view of the subject has ever been made, and I cannot accept it. Shakespeare, in his plays, has depicted "people of all sorts," and among others he has depicted several sorts of depraved women, one of them, *Cressida*, being a natural, typical, representative harlot. It is, however, to be observed that he has not dilated on her career, has not expatiated on her licentiousness, has not enumerated her intrigues, has not analyzed her libidinous propensities, has not tinged his portrayal of her misconduct with any sophistical coloring, has not entered for her any plea in extenuation; has simply drawn her as a type of rank carnality and so dismissed her. Such persons have always existed, they exist now, and they always will



exist. That it is necessary, right, or defensible that they should be exploited in the Theatre I have never been able to perceive,—whether they be depicted by Shakespeare or by anybody else. From “Jane Shore” and “The Stranger” to “Denise” and “Camille,” nothing has ever come of the long, dreary, speciously sophistical exhibition of sexual vice and consequent misery but corruption of the moral sense, loose, flabby thinking, cant, and maudlin sentimentality. No good has come of it to anybody, least of all to the victims of their evil passions.

Altruism should prevail in the conduct of life, and with all fine natures it does prevail. The instinctive desire, while not universal nor perhaps general, is very considerable to help the weak, to shield the innocent, to liberate the oppressed, to comfort the afflicted, to find excuses for frailty, to take a charitable view of human infirmity; but while lovely in itself and beneficent in some of its results, it is, in vital particulars, ineffectual: it cannot eliminate depravity from a nature that is innately wicked, and it cannot dispel remorse,—or even mitigate that agony,—from a mind innately conscientious.

Belasco, by obtruding harlots on the stage,—as he has not scrupled to do, in presenting to public observance *Zaza* and *Laura Murdock*,—follows many precedents and impliedly approves the



exploitation of such persons,—unfortunate, pitiable, deplorable, sometimes amiable and gentle, more frequently hard, fierce, treacherous, and wicked. His published writings avow his views on this subject, and I have found his private assurances concurrent with his published writings. Those views do more credit to the kindness of his disposition than to the clarity of his thought. From his youth onward he has been deeply interested in aberrant women, studious of their aberrancy, solicitous for their rescue and reformation, charitable toward them, wishful to befriend them, and strenuous, when writing about them, to place them in the best possible light. “Whenever I rehearse a situation of passion, of crime, of wrongdoing” (so he writes), “I remember *the heart*. I make an *excuse*—seek out the *motive*, to put the actor in touch with the culprit’s *point of view*. The *excuse* is always there.” No form of reasoning could be more sophistical, more delusive, more mischievous. The *reason* for sin, for crime, for wrongdoing, is always there: but a broad distinction exists between the *reason* and the *excuse*. Some persons, naturally good, nevertheless do wrong, commit crime, sin against themselves and against both moral law and social order, because they cannot help it, because they are weak and cannot resist temptation. Other persons commit crime knowingly, deliberately,



intentionally, because they wish to do so, because they delight in doing so, and find their greatest possible gratification in acts of wickedness. Selfishness and greed are, in a vast number of cases, impervious to anything other than the operation of external forces painful to themselves: there are persons who possess no moral sense whatever. The notion that there is a substratum of goodness in every human being is one of the most flagrant delusions that ever entered the mind of sensible persons acquainted with the history of the world and aware of what is passing around them every hour. "I remember *the heart*," says Belasco: it would not be amiss to remember what was long ago said of that interesting organ by one of the wise prophets of his nation: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It is in the highest degree creditable to Belasco as a man that he possesses a tenderly compassionate, humane spirit and has always practically acted on the impulse of it; neither wisdom nor justice is discernible in the "moral teaching" that he has liberated by his indiscriminate subservience to it in the instances I have named.



## PRODUCTION, AND CONTENTS, OF "ZAZA."

"Zaza" was first produced, December 25, 1898, at the Lafayette Opera House (now, 1917, the Belasco Theatre), Washington, D. C. The first presentation of it in New York occurred, January 9, 1899, at the Garrick Theatre, where it was acted till June 17, receiving 164 performances. "Zaza" is not so much a play as it is a series of loosely jointed, sequent episodes. The story is simple and vulgar. *Zaza* is a French prostitute. She has passed from the streets to the stage of country music halls and has become a singer. She is a common, shameless, termagant wanton, possessed, however, of an animal allurements which infatuates a man of respectable position and outwardly decent character. His name is *Dufrène*. By him she is removed from a life of miscellaneous degradation (and,—“purified” by “love”!—she dwells with him, in contentment, for six months,—remarking, as she pulls on her stockings, “I do think it’s the most beautiful thing in the world when two lovers come together.” At the end of that time she discovers that her paramour is married, and that he maintains his wife and their child in a respectable rural home and, at intervals, bestows upon them the boon of his precious company. With the tigerish resentment often charac-



teristic of her class, she immediately repairs to that home, intent to "revenge" herself upon *Dufrène's* wife by revealing the husband's infidelity. Her amiable purpose is diverted by an encounter with his child, whose prattle so profoundly affects her supersensitive "better feelings" that she quits the field, returns to her civic bower, which has been provided by *Dufrène*, there provokes a violent quarrel with that hypocritical libertine, so enrages him that he threatens to strike her, and finally elicits from him the assurance that his wife is much more precious to him than his harlot is. The separation of this edifying couple ensues. Stimulated by this experience of "purification by love," *Zaza* determines to achieve artistic greatness without further delay, and this she incontinently does, becoming, within two years,—“through much misery, much grief, much work, and a little luck,” as she expresses it,—a great artist, wealthy and (general concomitant of wealth!) respected, and, most delightful of all, a paragon of virtue, gently dismissing her recalcitrant paramour, *Dufrène* (who, unable to forget the rapturous interlude of his amatory association with her, has sought to renew it), in the peaceful seclusion of the Champs Élysées!

The play of "Zaza," in the French original, is even more offensive than in Belasco's adaptation,



but it possesses more unity as a dramatic fabric and more authenticity as a portrayal of a revolting phase of life. Belasco's version is much the superior as a commercial and theatrically useful vehicle. His purpose in adapting the play for the English-speaking Stage is thus stated by himself: "I wanted my audience to find some *excuse* for *Zaza's* past and to have less pity for the wife. When the play was produced in America and *Zaza sacrificed her own feelings for the sake of a child* the audience was so entirely in her favor that she won the tears of New York and, later on [*sic*], of London." "The tears" of New York, London, or any other residential locality are not difficult to "win" when an experienced hand at the theatrical fount pumps hard enough for them. Freed of flummery, what does this play signify? A woman essentially vile in nature, degraded by a career of vice, gross in her conduct, vitiated in her principles and feelings, is sentimentally affected by the babble of a child, and her holy "sacrifice of her own feelings" consists in abstention from wrecking the happiness of an innocent and injured woman who has never done her any harm. As a matter of fact, such a drab as *Zaza* would not have denied herself that gratification for the sake of a whole regiment of children,—but truth was not the goal desired: that object was



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profitable effect. Such dramas as "Zaza" defile the public mind and degrade the Stage, and it would be propitious for the community if they could be played on from a fire hose and washed into the sewer where they belong.

### MRS. CARTER'S IMPERSONATION OF ZAZA.

Mrs. Carter's performance of the patchouly-scented heroine of this tainted trash was much admired and extravagantly commended. As a work of dramatic art it was trivial: as a violent theatrical display of common surface traits,—a demonstration, in "Ercles' vein," of ability to tear a cat,—it was highly effective. The language of the gutter was spoken in the tone and with the manner of the gutter. The method of the execution was direct, broad, swift,—and coarse. The best technical merit of it was clarity of utterance. In *Zaza's* scene with the child Mrs. Carter was mechanical and monotonous. It was the utter, reckless abandon, the uncontrolled physical and vocal vehemence, the virago-like intensity of her abuse of her lover, which, communicating themselves to the nerves of her auditors and overwhelming them by violence, gained the actress her success in the part. If to "tear a passion to tatters, to very rags," to take up the carpet tacks





Photograph by Sarony.

Belasco's Collection.

MRS. LESLIE CARTER AS ZAZA







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and demolish the furniture, be to act greatly, then Mrs. Carter's *Zaza* was a great piece of acting; not otherwise. Her popularity was unequivocal, and it constituted a triumph for Belasco even more remarkable than for her.

This was the original cast of "Zaza," at the Garrick Theatre, New York, January 9, 1899:

<i>Bernard Dufrène</i> .....	Charles A. Stevenson.
<i>Duc de Brissac</i> .....	Albert Bruning.
<i>Cascart</i> .....	Mark Smith (Jr.).
<i>Jacques Rigault</i> .....	Hugo Toland.
<i>Chamblay, Jr.</i> .....	Gilmore Scott.
<i>Hector</i> .....	Lester Gruner.
<i>Blac</i> .....	Harold Howard.
<i>Brigard</i> .....	W. B. Murray.
<i>Mounet-Pombla</i> .....	Gerard Anderson.
<i>Joly</i> .....	Herbert Millward.
<i>Carvalho Bros. (acrobats)</i> .....	Leona and Master Bimbi.
<i>Jabowski</i> .....	Walter Stuart.
<i>Adolphe</i> .....	Lawrence Reeves.
<i>Coachman</i> .....	Alfred Hollingsworth.
<i>Criquet</i> .....	Edgar Hart.
<i>Rosa Bonné</i> .....	Marie Bates.
<i>Madame Dufrène</i> .....	Mabel Howard.
<i>Divonne</i> .....	Lizzie DuRoy.
<i>Lixette</i> .....	Emma Chase.
<i>Toto</i> .....	Helen Thill.
<i>Florianne</i> .....	Anne Sutherland.
<i>Alice Morel</i> .....	Maude Winter.
<i>Lolotte</i> .....	Marie Thill.
<i>Juliette</i> .....	Eleanor Stuart.



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<i>Niniche</i> .....	Elizabeth Belknap.
<i>Leonie</i> .....	Corah Adams.
<i>Clairette</i> .....	Helma Horneman.
<i>Adele</i> .....	Aurelia A. Granville.
<i>Flower Girl</i> .....	Louisa Burnham.
<i>Nathalie</i> .....	Helen Tracy.
<i>Zaza</i> .....	Mrs. Leslie Carter.

(Mem. When "Zaza" was revived, in 1905, a minor character called *Lisvon* was added: it was played by Amelia G. Granville.)

### DEATH OF BELASCO'S MOTHER.—"CAN THE DEAD COME BACK?"—A STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

The instant and immense popular success of "Zaza" was embittered for Belasco by close association with a loss and sorrow that time has not lightened,—the death of his beloved mother, which befell on January 11, 1899, at No. 174 Clara Street, San Francisco. During rehearsals of his play and its presentments in Washington Belasco, so he has told me, "had *felt* that she was ill," but had no thought that her condition was critical. Writing about her death, he gives the following interesting account of a strange experience:

"Ever since my boyhood I have been interested in the subject of spiritualism. For many years I have asked myself the question: '*Can the dead come back?*' . . . One morning, after a late rehearsal, I reached home at three o'clock,



completely fagged out. No sooner had I fallen asleep than I seemed to waken, and there stood my mother beside my bed. 'Davie, Davie, Davie,' she said three times, smiled, and bending over kissed me good-bye. She said other things—told me she was happy—not to grieve. I could not stir, but kept my eyes fixed upon her as she moved towards the door and disappeared. How long I lay staring into the darkness I do not know, but at last I managed to collect myself, put on my dressing-gown, and, still dazed, went downstairs to a little sitting-room. My family heard me. 'What are you doing downstairs?' my youngest child, Augusta, asked, and she tried to coax me back to bed. I went to my room, but I could not sleep. When I told my family of my vision, and that I believed my mother was dead, they suggested that I was overwrought and tired and had seen my mother in a dream.

"I went to rehearsal the next morning, and during an interval had luncheon at Churchill's—then a small coffee-house—with a member of the theatre staff. I sat there, much troubled, thinking of the figure of my mother as she appeared in the dawn. My companion noticed my silence, and, when I told him of my experience, tried to reassure me. As we rose to go he handed me some letters and telegrams he had found in the box-office. Among the telegrams was one telling me the sad news of my mother's death. Later I found that she died at the exact time she appeared at my bedside. At the very moment I saw her she was passing out of the world. Several years after, when I paid a visit to San Francisco, my brothers and sisters told me my mother smiled and murmured my name three times before she died. . . . I do not know that the dead *do* come back. I *do* know that at the time of passing the spirit sends a thought through space, and this thought is so powerful that the receiver can



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see the sender. This was proved by my dear mother. She came to me no more, however."

In speaking of his parents Belasco has deeply impressed me by the fervor and sincerity of his filial affections. "My mother," he has said, "was the best loved woman in Victoria and in San Francisco,—and she was the truest, best friend I ever had or shall have. She was called 'the Good Angel' of the poorer quarters. As she grew older, in the latter city, when going about in streetcars, conductors would, when she wished to leave, escort her to the sidewalk, or would bring her to the car, if she wished to board it. When she died she had the greatest funeral a private person ever had in San Francisco. My brother told me it seemed as though every vehicle in town was in the line. She was very poetic, romantic, and keenly imaginative and gentleness itself. Any good I have ever done I owe to her."—In a letter to a friend he writes thus about his mother:

". . . I cannot tell you how close we were—how she seemed always to understand me without words and often [seemed] to be near me when I was in trouble and needed help. You know, I believe such feelings are inspired by something real: 'the realities of the spirit are more real than anything else.' . . . Very often we exchanged mes-



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sages just by sending flowers, and it was the same way with my little 'Gussie.' . . . Flowers have always been a passion with me. Ever since I was a little boy, in Vancouver, and my mother used to come and find me dreaming among them on the hillside, I have loved them all. . . . But the violets were always my favorites, as they were hers. She always had them about her, from girlhood, and, indeed, my father wooed her with them. There was a bunch of them beside her in the little cellar-room where I was born (so she used to tell me), and when they brought me to her on a pillow she took some in her hand and sprinkled them over me. All my clothes, when I was a baby, had a violet embroidered on them, somewhere. The last gift I ever received from my mother was a black silk scarf, with violets embroidered on it,—and long, long hours it must have taken her to do it, for she could hardly hold a needle. Once, when I was a boy, I took \$20 from a secret little hoard of hers, to pay for an operation on my throat which I didn't want her to know about. Of course she missed it but she never said a word, and when I had saved up the money I just put it in a bunch of violets and left it for her. And when at last she went away and I could not be there I sent violets to cover her grave and say my 'Good-bye.'"

### BLANCHE BATES AND "NAUGHTY ANTHONY."

Much the most interesting person and much the ablest performer who has appeared under the management of Belasco is Blanche Bates. At the zenith of her career she exhibited a combination of brilliant beauty, inspiring animation and impetu-



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ous vigor quite extraordinary and irresistibly winning. Her lovely dark eyes sparkled with glee. Her handsome countenance radiated gladness. She seemed incarnate joy. Her voice was clear, liquid, sweet; her enunciation distinct, her bearing distinguished, her action free and graceful. I have seldom seen an actress whose mere presence conveyed such a delightful sense of abounding vitality and happiness. In the last ten years no actress in our country has equalled her in brilliancy and power. She might have grasped the supremacy of the American Stage, alike in Comedy and Tragedy, personating such representative parts as Shakespeare's *Beatrice* and *Cleopatra* and taking by right the place once occupied by Ada Rehan and afterward by Julia Marlowe. While under Belasco's management she did give three performances which deservedly are remembered among the best of her time,—namely, *Cigarette*, in "Under Two Flags"; *Yo-San*, in "The Darling of the Gods," and *The Girl*, in "The Girl of the Golden West." But, although incontestably she possesses intellectual character, a strain of capricious levity is also among her attributes; she has weakly acquiesced to the dictates of vacuous social taste and sordid commercial spirit, paltered with her great talents, thrown away high ambition and golden opportunity,



and so came at last to mere failure and obscurity. Her nature and her artistic style require for their full and free arousal and exercise parts of romantic, passionate, picturesque character, admitting of large, bold, sparkling treatment. She acted under Belasco's direction for about twelve years: since leaving it, in 1912, she has done nothing in the Theatre of importance. "The modern, 'drawing-room drama' in which she aspired to play,"—so Belasco once remarked to me,—“is not, to my mind, suited to her, and so we parted.”

Blanche Bates is a native of Portland, Oregon, born August 25, 1872; her father was manager of the Oro Fino Theatre, Portland, at the time of her birth. Her youth was passed in San Francisco, where she was well educated. She went on the stage in 1894, appearing at Stockwell's Theatre (later called the Columbia), in that city, in a play called "This Picture and That." Her novitiate was served chiefly under the management of T. Daniel Frawley. For several years she acted in cities in the Far West, playing all sorts of parts. At one time, in California, she was professionally associated with that fine comedian Frank Worthing (Francis George Pentland, 1866-1910), who materially helped to develop and train her histrionic talents. Belasco first became acquainted with her while she



was yet a child, at the time of his professional alliance with her mother, Mrs. F. M. Bates. In 1896, during Mrs. Carter's first season in "The Heart of Maryland," Blanche visited New York, witnessed that performance, and applied to Belasco for employment. At the moment it was not possible for him to engage her, but he was neither forgetful of an old promise of his made to Mrs. Bates that he would assist her daughter, if ever he should be able to do so, nor unmindful of the beauty, talent, and charming personality of the applicant, and he assured her that she "should have a chance" at the first opportunity. That opportunity did not present itself for nearly three years. Meanwhile, Miss Bates returned to California and acted there, for about two years more, with the Frawley company. In the Spring of 1898 she was engaged by Augustin Daly and for a short time she acted under his management. On February 9, 1899, she made a single brilliantly successful appearance, at Daly's Theatre, as the *Countess Mirtsa*, on the occasion of the first presentment in this country of the popular melodrama of "The Great Ruby." She disagreed, however, with the autocratic Daly and immediately retired from his company. On March 13, 1899, acting at the Broadway Theatre, New York, in association with Belasco's old friend and comrade

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Photograph by Sarony.

Belasco's Collection.

BELASCO, ABOUT 1899-1900







James O'Neill, she distinguished herself as *Milady*, in "The Three Guardsmen," and on October 19, that year, at the Herald Square Theatre, she gave a notably fine performance,—splendidly effective in the principal scene,—of *Hannah Jacobs*, in Israel Zangwill's stage synopsis of his novel of "The Children of the Ghetto." A few weeks later Belasco informed Miss Bates that if she were willing to begin in a farce which he did not much esteem he was ready to undertake her management preparatory to "giving her her chance." "The Children of the Ghetto" had proved a failure, and the actress joyfully accepted the manager's proposal.

Blanche Bates first acted under Belasco's management, December 25, 1899, at the Columbia Theatre, Washington, D. C., appearing as *Cora*, the principal person in Belasco's "Naughty Anthony": on January 8, 1900, she appeared in it at the Herald Square Theatre, New York. The title of that farce is not altogether felicitous, because possibly suggestive of impropriety, but there is nothing mischievous in the fabric itself. The piece is incorporative of one scene, varied and rewritten, from an unremembered farce of other days, and, with its freightage of old but always effective stage subterfuges and comic "business," it reminded experienced observers of such plays, far and for-



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got now, as "Flies in the Web," "My Neighbor's Wife," "Playing with Fire," "To Oblige Benson," etc. In it Belasco made use of one of the oldest theatrical expedients for creating comic confusion and mirthful effect,—the expedient of a mistaken identity. The chief male in it is *Anthony Depew*, a moral professor of the Chautauqua brotherhood, who becomes enamoured of a coquetish girl, in the hosiery business, and whose exploits in osculation lead him into a troublesome dilemma, from which he endeavors to escape by pretending to be somebody else. This kind of perplexity has been common on the stage since the distant days of "The Three Singles; or, Two and the Deuce." Such themes do not require much comment. The chief fact to be recorded in this case is the uncommon felicity of the cast and the excellence of the stage direction. But such an actor as Frank Worthing (who was essentially a light comedian, and, as such, the most conspicuous local performer of the day, in his particular line) and such an actress as Miss Bates were practically wasted in so ephemeral a trifle. This was the cast in full:

<i>Cowley</i> .....	Albert Bruning.
<i>Adam Budd</i> .....	William J. LeMoyne.
<i>Zachary Chillinton</i> .....	William Elton.
<i>Jack Cheviot</i> .....	Charles Wyngate.



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<i>Mr. Heusted</i> .....	Claude Gillingwater.
<i>Mr. Brigham</i> .....	E. P. Wilkes.
<i>Miss Rinkett</i> .....	Fanny Young.
<i>Cowley</i> .....	Albert Bruning.
<i>Knox</i> .....	Samuel Edwards.
<i>Ed</i> .....	Brandon Tynan.
<i>Mrs. Zachary Chillingham</i> .....	Maud Harrison.
<i>Rosy</i> .....	Mary Barker.
<i>Winnie</i> .....	Olive Redpath.
<i>Cora</i> .....	Blanche Bates.

Belasco's serious purpose, in this play, underlying the quest of laughter, was to satirize moral humbug, and that good purpose he accomplished. *Anthony Depew* is an amiable impostor, established at Chautauqua, New York, to give lessons in moral conduct to persons who deem themselves tempted to go astray. He goes astray himself, as far as compromising osculation, and he causes all manner of disturbance, in several households, by fixing the guilt of a kiss upon an innocent booby, who is his landlord. Worthing embodied that humbug in an admirable manner. His plan was definite, his execution firm and true, his satire cumulative; and from first to last he never swerved from that demeanor of perfect gravity which makes absurd proceedings irresistibly amusing. Miss Bates, even more than usually beautiful as *Cora*, made the tempter of *'Anthony* a compound of demure simplicity and arch,



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piquant glee, and, in her complete frustration of the *Professor's* moral heroics, she was a delightful incarnation of honest, healthful, triumphant woman nature. A colloquy of these two players, as preceptor and pupil, has seldom been surpassed for pure fun. Specification of the fantastic situations in which the *Professor* involves himself and his landlord, *Adam Budd*,—abundantly comical in the seemingly unpremeditated humor, the soft, silky manner, and the grotesque personality assumed by Le Moyne,—would be a tedious business. Good acting, however, did not suffice to sustain the play in public favor. Writing about this venture Belasco says:

“At the time I wrote ‘Naughty Anthony’ the country was farce mad,—but the public will not accept me as a farce writer, and it was a failure. I believed, at the time, that had somebody else produced my play it might have succeeded, and this actually proved to be the case; for when I sold the piece and it was taken on the road, with my name omitted from the programme, it made money, although it had cost me a pretty penny. I soon saw that ‘Naughty Anthony’ must be withdrawn or something added to the bill in order to keep it going.”

### “MADAME BUTTERFLY.”

Some little while before the production of “Naughty Anthony” Belasco had received from a



stranger a letter in which he was urged to read a story, called "Madame Butterfly," by John Luther Long, with a view to making it into a play. When anxiously casting about for some means of providing reinforcement for his farce he chanced to recollect that suggestion, procured a copy of Long's book containing his tragic tale, read it and was so much impressed by the possibilities which he perceived of basing on it a striking theatrical novelty that he entered into communication with Long and arranged with him for the use of his story. This proved, in several ways, a most fortunate occurrence: it led to a valued and lasting friendship and, ultimately, to the writing of two other memorable dramas,—*"The Darling of the Gods"* and *"Adrea,"*—as well as to the composition of a beautiful and extraordinarily popular opera, and it resulted, directly, in the making and production, by Belasco, of one of the most effective short plays of the last twenty-five years,—the success of which did much to sustain him under the disappointment of failure and the burden of heavy loss.

Belasco's tragedy of *"Madame Butterfly"* is comprised in one act, of two scenes, which, connected by a pictorial intercalation, are presented without a break, and it implicates eight persons, besides its heroine, all of whom are merely incidental to depic-



tion of her tragic fate. The substance of its story is contained in Goldsmith's familiar lines about the sad consequences of lovely woman's genuflection to folly. A man commits the worst and meanest of all acts, the wronging of an innocent girl, and then deserts her. The case has often been stated—but it is not less pathetic because it is familiar. In this instance the girl is a Japanese, and in Japan, and thus the image of her joy, sorrow, desolation, and death are investable with opulent color and quaint accessories. Her name is *Cho-Cho-San*, and, by her lover, she is called "*Madame Butterfly*." Her family is one of good position, but her father, a soldier of the emperor, having been defeated in battle, has killed himself, and her relatives, being poor, have induced *Cho-Cho-San*, in order that she may be able to provide maintenance for them, to enter into the relation of housekeeping prostitute with an officer of the United States Navy, *Lieutenant B. F. Pinkerton* by name, who is stationed for a few months at Higashi, Japan, and who feels himself to be in need of female companionship and that "comfort other than pecuniary" specified by Patrick Henry. According to the enlightened and advanced customs of Japan (which various English-speaking exponents of progress and free-everything, including free-"love," are laboring to establish in



our benighted country) this relationship is not degrading and despicable but respectable and, in circumstances which are of frequent occurrence, to be desired. As *Butterfly* expresses it, though the naval officer is described by the Japanese as "a barbarian and a beast," "Aevery one say: 'yaes, take him—take him beas'—he's got moaneys,' so I say for jus' liddle while, perhaps I can stan'."

*Pinkerton*, however, proves to be a delightful companion who wins the love of the Japanese girl and, with the crass cruelty common among viciously self-indulgent men, he assures that forlorn waif that her marriage to him is not merely a temporary arrangement of convenience, terminable, according to Japanese law, by the mere act of desertion, but is a binding, permanent one, according to American custom and law and that she is, in fact, *Mrs. B. F. Pinkerton*. Having led her to believe this, the amiable *Pinkerton* presently departs upon his ship, after making *Butterfly* a present of money, informing her that he has "had a very nice time" and assuring her that he will come back "when the robins nest again." The girl, confidently awaiting the return of her lover, whom she declares and believes to be her lawful husband, after a little time becomes a mother by him. Two years pass—during which she refuses many suitors—and the



money given her by *Pinkerton* has been all but exhausted: *Butterfly* is confronted by the alternative of beggary or starvation, yet she contemptuously rejects all proffers of rich alliances, serenely trusting in the faith of *Pinkerton*. Then, at last, he comes back, and she is apprised that though for two weeks after leaving her he was "dotty in love with her" he recovered from his sublime passion and that he has married another woman (who magnanimously offers to take away her child and rear it!)—whereupon *Madame Butterfly* kills herself.

The play is a situation, and, though some of its detail is trivial, it reveals elemental extremes and contrasts of much human experience; in its essential passages it possesses the cardinal merits of simplicity and directness, and in representation its effect is tragic and afflictingly pathetic. One feature of its performance, devised by Belasco, was, in respect to execution, unique,—namely, the intercalation whereby the two scenes of the tragedy are connected. When, at evening, the forlorn *Butterfly*,—after two years "jus' waitin'—sometimes cryin'—sometimes watchin'—but always waitin'!"—sees the warship to which *Pinkerton* is attached entering the harbor of Higashi she believes that her "husband" will immediately repair to their abode and she becomes almost delirious with joy. She prepares for his





Photograph by Byron.

Belasco's Collection.

"Too bad—those robin—never nes'—again!"

THE DEATH SCENE, BELASCO'S "MADAME BUTTERFLY"

BLANCHE BATES AS *CHO-CHO-SAN*. FRANK WORTHING  
AS *LIEUTENANT B. F. PINKERTON*



1



reception, attiring herself and their little child in fine array and decking the house with flowers and lighted lanterns. Then, with the child and a servant maid, she takes station at a window, to give him welcome—and there she waits and watches through the night, until the morning breaks. The lapse of time was, in the performance, skilfully and impressively denoted,—the shades of evening darkening into night; stars becoming visible, then brilliant, then fading from view; the lighted lanterns one by one flickering out; the gray light of dawn revealing the servant and the child prone upon the floor sunk in slumber, with the deserted mother standing over them, pale and wan, still gazing fixedly down the vacant road, while the rosy glow of sunrise grew into the full light of day and the sweet sound of the waking songs of birds floated in from a flowering grove of cherry trees. In the representation this scene, during which no word was spoken and no motion made, occupied *fourteen minutes*—and surely no tribute to Belasco's resource and skill in stage management and stage mechanics could be more significant than the fact that during all that time never did the interest of his audiences waver nor their attention flag.

At the end, when *Butterfly* knows her lover faithless and her life ruined and desolate, she takes her



father's sword,—on which is graven his dying monition, "To *die* with honor, when we can no longer *live* with honor,"—and with it deals herself a mortal stroke. This desperate deed is done out of the audience's sight and as, with ghastly face and a scarf bound round her throat to hide the wound, she staggers forward to clasp her child to her breast, *Pinkerton* enters the room and *Butterfly*, holding the child in her arms, sinks at his feet, turning on him a look of anguish as she murmurs "Too bad—those robin'—never nes'—again!"—and so dies.

"*Madame Butterfly*" was first presented at the Herald Square Theatre, March 5, 1900. The scenic habiliment in which Belasco attired that tragedy was one of great beauty and perfect taste and it had never been equalled by anything rightly comparable, excepting Augustin Daly's exquisite setting of "*Heart of Ruby*" (a play on a Japanese theme adapted by Justin Huntly McCarthy from Mme. Judith Gautier's "*La Marchande de Sourires*"), produced at Daly's Theatre, January 15, 1895,—which was a complete failure: it cost Daly about \$25,000 and it was withdrawn after seven performances. Belasco's Japanese venture, happily, was fortunate from the first, creating a profound impression and achieving instant success. A notably effective scenic innovation was the precedent use of "picture drops,"



delicately painted and very lovely pictures showing various aspects of Japan,—a rice field, a flower garden, a distant prospect of a snow-capped volcano in the light of the setting sun, and other views,—by way of creating a Japanese atmosphere before the scene of the drama was disclosed. Blanche Bates embodied the hapless *Butterfly* and animated the character with a winning show of woman's fidelity, with a lovely artlessness of manner and speech, and with occasional flashes of that vivid emotional fire which was her supreme attribute. Her personation at first caused laughter and at last touched the source of tears,—but the predominant figure in the history of this play, both at the first and now, was and is that of Belasco: more, perhaps, in respect to "Madame Butterfly" than of any other of his productions it may properly be said that his personality seemed to have permeated every detail of this performance and its environment. This was the original cast:

*Cho-Cho-San (Madame Butterfly)*.....Blanche Bates.  
*Suzuki*, her servant.....Marie Bates.  
*Mr. Sharpless*, American Consul.....Claude Gillingwater.  
*Lieutenant B. F. Pinkerton*.....Frank Worthing.  
*Yamadori*.....Albert Bruning.  
*Nakodo*.....E. P. Wilks.  
*Kate, Mrs. Pinkerton*.....Katherine Black.



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*Trouble*, the child.....Kittie ——.  
*Attendant*.....William Lamp.  
*Attendant*.....Westropp Saunders.

### "ZAZA" ABROAD.

The Belasco season at the Herald Square Theatre was ended on March 24, and on April 5, on board the steamship *St. Paul*, he sailed for England, with Mrs. Leslie Carter and a numerous theatrical company, to present that actress, in partnership with Charles Frohman, in "*Zaza*," at the Garrick Theatre, London. That project had been planned by the two managers many months before and it was triumphantly fulfilled on April 16,—Belasco's version of the French play and Mrs. Carter's performance in it being received in the British capital with rapturous applause and remaining current there until July 28. The principal persons who seem to have entertained seriously dissenting and dissatisfied views as to Belasco's treatment of the subject were the authors of the French original, MM. Berton and Simon, whose conceit was great and whose indignation was lively because their noxious drama had not been deemed sacrosanct but had been freely altered.





Al mio Collaboratore e amico  
 By David Belasco  
 New York '910  
 grato ricordo di Giacomo Puccini

Photograph by Dupont.

Belasco's Collection.

GIACOMO PUCCINI

INSCRIPTION:

"Al mio collaboratore e amico Sig. David Belasco: grato ricordo  
 GIACOMO PUCCINI"







VIEWS OF THE FRENCH DRAMATISTS.

Belasco, in his "Story," gives some account of the attitude of the French authors toward his adaptation of their play, to which, undoubtedly, they were indebted for profit and reputation they would not otherwise have obtained:

"During the summer of 1900 we took 'Zaza' to London. Before opening there I went to Paris to visit the authors, Berton and Simon. They had been paid large sums for the American rights of 'Zaza,' and as the success of 'Zaza' in America led to its revival in Paris their profits were enormous. Naturally, I was a welcome guest and my week-end visit was very agreeable, as it was made to the accompaniment of a song of praise—of superlative gratitude. What I had accomplished was remarkable! Superb! There was no other man, etc., etc. In the meanwhile I was wondering what they would say when they saw the manuscript of 'Zaza.' They came to London for the first night, preceded by a huge hamper of flowers for Mrs. Carter. The opening was a brilliant function. The late King Edward, then Prince of Wales, was present; also King George, then Duke of York. I remember the military bearing of Clement Scott in his scarlet-lined coat, and the rough and ready appearance of Bernard Shaw, in his soft shirt and crush hat. What the latter thought of Mrs. Carter found its caustic way into the columns of 'The Saturday Review'; what the audience thought was told by the growing enthusiasm as the play progressed; what Berton and Simon thought was shown by a certain coolness in their attitude



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toward me. Their enthusiasm died a natural death after the Second Act, and the more demonstrative the audience the less pleased were they. At the close of the Third Act they left the house, telling me in heated terms that I had ruined their climax and it was not their play at all. Curiously enough, they did not see the humor of the situation. My version made their fortune because it made the woman possible to an English-speaking audience. The authors were in the odd position of quarreling with their bread and butter (an unusual situation for playwrights). They grew angrier and angrier as the play gained favor with the public, and their royalties were increased week after week. Those were strenuous days. However, they calmed down, and in the course of time Monsieur Berton asked me to forget the letter of denunciation he wrote to me from Paris."

### "WITH SPEED FOR ENGLAND."—ANOTHER SUCCESS IN LONDON.

The success which Belasco had gained with "Madame Butterfly" in New York was so great that, had he chosen to do so, he could have successfully prolonged his season there, at the Herald Square Theatre, throughout the summer of 1900. But his plans for producing "Zaza" in London were complete and he was bound "with speed for England"; he determined, therefore, to carry his little Japanese tragedy with him, having it in mind to show theatre-goers in the British capital, simultaneously, two vividly contrasted specimens of his



theatrical resource and power. 'At first, he was disposed to transport the company, headed by Blanche Bates, as well as the production,—that is, the scenery, dresses, "properties" and effects. But when he sought to do this it proved to be impracticable: the only arrangement that he found it feasible to make was one with his partner in the "Zaza" venture, Charles Frohman, who, at the time, was successfully presenting, at the Duke of York's Theatre, London, Jerome K. Jerome's comedy of "Miss Hobbs." With Frohman, accordingly, Belasco arranged to bring forward "Madame Butterfly" as an "after-piece" to "Miss Hobbs,"—and as it was manifestly injudicious unnecessarily to maintain two stars at one and the same theatre, Belasco decided (to the lively disgust of Miss Bates) to cast the player of *Miss Hobbs*, Miss Evelyn Millard, at that time a popular favorite in London, for *Madame Butterfly*, depending on himself to train and guide her through the performance of that part. This self-confidence was fully justified,—the little tragedy being received with profound admiration both by the press and the public. It was acted at the Duke of York's, April 28, with this cast:

*Cho-Cho-San (Madame Butterfly)* . . . . . Evelyn Millard.  
*Mr. Sharpless* . . . . . Claude Gillingwater.



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<i>Lieutenant B. F. Pinkerton</i> .....	Allan Aynesworth.
<i>Yamadori</i> .....	William H. Day.
<i>Nakado</i> .....	J. C. Buckstone.
<i>Suzuki</i> .....	Susie Vaughan.
<i>Kate, Mrs. Pinkerton</i> .....	Janet Evelyn Sothern.

### PUCCINI AND BELASCO.

Belasco, as he told me, declined to attend the first London performance of his "Butterfly." "I didn't know how it might go," he said, "—and I didn't intend to be called out and 'boo-ed.' Frohman was very confident and kept telling me it would be all right, but I didn't go 'round (I was busy, too, at the Garrick) till right at the end and then I only went 'in front.' " At the end, however, the enthusiasm of the audience was so great and the calls for him were so long and urgent that he was at last compelled to go upon the stage and make his grateful acknowledgments. "I sometimes feel," said Belasco, "that the tribute of that English audience, at first sitting in absolute silence, except for the sound of some women crying, then calling and calling for me and waiting and waiting, while Frohman came 'round in front and found me and insisted upon my going to the stage, was the most gratifying I ever received. Giacomo Puccini, the Italian composer, was in front that night and after



the curtain fell he came behind the scenes to embrace me enthusiastically and to beg me to let him use 'Madame Butterfly' as an opera libretto. I agreed at once and told him he could do anything he liked with the play and make any sort of contract he liked—because it is not possible to discuss business arrangements with an impulsive Italian who has tears in his eyes and both his arms round your neck! I never believed he did see 'Madame Butterfly' that first night; he only heard the music he was *going* to write. Afterward I came to know him well, and found him the most agreeable and simple-hearted fellow in the world,—a great artist without the so-called 'temperament.'"

"MADAME BUTTERFLY" AS AN OPERA.—A PROPOSAL BY  
LADY VALERIE MEUX.

Puccini's opera, entitled "Madama Butterfly," was first performed in New York, in an English version, under the management of Henry Savage, at the Garden Theatre, November 12, 1906. Elza Szamosy, an Hungarian, sang *Cio-Cio-San*; Harriet Behne *Suzuki*; Joseph F. Sheehan *Pinkerton*, and Winifred Goff *Mr. Sharpless*. The first performance of it in Italian occurred in New York, at the Metropolitan Opera House, February 11,



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1907, when,—with its composer among the audience  
—it was sung by the following cast:

<i>Cio-Cio-San</i> .....	Geraldine Farrar.
<i>Suzuki</i> .....	Louise Homer.
<i>Kate, Mrs. Pinkerton</i> .....	Laura Mapleson.
<i>La Madre</i> .....	Josephine Jacoby.
<i>La Cugina</i> .....	——— Shearman.
<i>La Zia</i> .....	——— Moran.
<i>Lieutenant Pinkerton</i> .....	Enrico Caruso.
<i>Mr. Sharpless</i> .....	Antonio Scotti.
<i>Goro</i> .....	Albert Reiss.
<i>Yamadori</i> .....	——— Paroli.
<i>Lo Zio Bonzo</i> .....	Adolf Mühlmann.
<i>Yakuside</i> .....	Giulio Rossi.
<i>Il Commissario Imperiale</i> .....	——— Bégué.
<i>Un Ufficiale del Registro</i> .....	Francesco Navarini.

Referring to the production of this opera at the Metropolitan, Belasco writes: "I loaned my models [for the scenery] and sent over my electricians."— I have not heard Puccini's music. My old friend and colleague Henry Edward Krehbiel has written of it:

"... Genuine Japanese tunes come to the surface of the instrumental flood at intervals and tunes which copy their characteristics of rhythm, melody, and color. As a rule this is a dangerous proceeding except in comedy which aims to chastise the foibles and follies of a people and a period. Nothing is more admirable, however, than Signor





Photograph by Alme Dupont.

Belasco's Collection.

GERALDINE FARRAR AS *CHI-CHI-SAN*, IN PUCCINI'S  
OPERA, "MADAMA BUTTERFLY," BASED ON  
BELASCO'S TRAGEDY







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Puccini's use of it to heighten the dramatic climaxes; the merry tune with which *Cio-Cio-San* diverts her child in the Second Act and the use of a bald native tune thundered out *fortissimo* in naked unison with the periodic punctuations of harmony at the close are striking cases in point. Nor should the local color in the delineation of the break of day in the beginning of the Third Act and the charmingly felicitous use of mellifluous songs in the Marriage Scene be overlooked. Always the effect is musical and dramatically helpful. As for the rest there are many moments of a strange charm in the score, music filled with a haunting tenderness and poetic loveliness, music in which there is a beautiful meeting of the external picture and the spiritual content of the scene. Notable among these moments is the scene in which *Butterfly* and her attendant scatter flowers throughout the room in expectation of *Pinkerton's* return. Here melodies and harmonies are exhaled like the odors of the flowers."

And elsewhere Mr. Krehbiel remarks that

"there is nothing more admirable in the score of 'Madama Butterfly' than the refined and ingenious skill with which the composer bent the square-toed rhythms and monotonous tunes of Japanese music to his purposes."

"Madame Butterfly" ran at the Duke of York's Theatre until July 13. In America it was presented, throughout the season of 1900-'01, beginning at Elmira, New York, September 17, in association with "Naughty Anthony," by a company headed by Miss Valerie Bergere and Charles



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E. Evans. On February 18, 1901, the tragedy was acted at Proctor's Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York, and ran till May 11. Miss Bergere performed as *Cho-Cho-San* until March 29, when she was succeeded by the French actress Mlle. Pilar-Morin. Since then "Butterfly" has been acted unnumbered times.

During the summer season of "Zaza" in London (1900), Belasco was approached by the eccentric Lady Valerie Meux, a person of great wealth and peculiar antecedents, with a proposal that he give up the management and direction of Mrs. Carter and assume that of Mrs. Cora Urquhart Potter, in whom she was then much interested. Belasco was well acquainted with Mrs. Potter, who, indeed, was one of the many amateur players trained by him while at the Madison Square Theatre (1884, *et seq.*) and for whose professional appearance on the stage, under the management of Daniel Frohman, he had arranged, in 1886,—an arrangement which Mrs. Potter suddenly abrogated. Belasco esteemed her histrionic abilities much higher than ever there was warrant for doing (he has written about her: "If I could have succeeded in drawing her away from society, from the host of admirers and over-zealous friends who fondled and petted her and kept her from really working, and if she



could have appreciated the simplicity of life, she could have taken *front rank* in her profession”), but he would not give up the direction or Mrs. Carter’s career and therefore he declined Lady Meux’s proposal. That singular person then expressed a wish that he should transfer his theatrical activities from America to England, offered to build for him “the finest playhouse in the land” and to provide him with ample money with which to conduct it, so that he “might be free and untrammelled by financial cares” and fulfil all his ambitions. “Of course,” he has said, in telling me of these incidents, “her offer had a tempting sound, but nothing could have induced me to accept it. Not only would I not consider deserting Mrs. Carter, but I knew that Mrs. Potter could never give up the social world for the exclusive hard work of the Stage. And also I knew that within a year, perhaps less, Lady Meux would have grown tired of her fancy and my position would be intolerable. I wanted a theatre in London—in fact, I want one now and, perhaps, in spite of the war, I may have one yet—but not one tied up in apron-strings.” His decision to reject the offers of Lady Meux certainly was wise.







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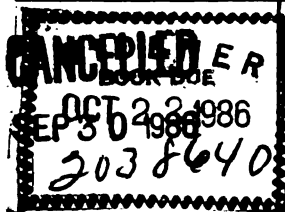
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